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# BRAVE AND BOLD

A DIFFERENT COMPLETE STORY EVERY WEEK

No 7

STOLEN! - A SCHOOLHOUSE  
or Sport and Strife  
at Still River



BY ERNEST A. YOUNG

A tiny flicker of light gleamed from under his hand, and an instant later a small blaze was kindled at the base.



# BRAVE & BOLD

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## STOLEN—A SCHOOLHOUSE;

OR,

## Sport and Strife at Still River.

By ERNEST A. YOUNG.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE STILL RIVER SCHOOLHOUSE.

"Tetter look out, mister, or they'll be heavin' rocks at ye.

The one to whom this warning was addressed had just brought his bicycle to a halt and stepped off.

It was an easy thing to do at that spot—much easier than it would have been to have kept on.

Not that the road was not level enough, but the sand was nearly ankle deep, and Jud Fenwick's pneumatic tires, at the point where they came in contact with the earth, were "out of sight." This term is used literally, and not as a joke.

Jud Fenwick rested his wheel against a tree, and calmly wiped the perspiration from his face, while he looked down at the youngster who seemed so solicitous for his safety.

Jud Fenwick was very deliberate in manner, and similarly so in speech.

"And who should be heaving rocks at me?" he inquired, as his gaze wandered from the face of the boy out across an open field, where between twenty and thirty boys, of all ages, appeared to be engaged in some sort of a squabble.

"Because the Sanford fellers say they ain't goin' ter let the Still River master step foot inside the schoolhouse—not unless he can lick the whole of 'em."

Just the suspicion of a smile seemed to twitch the corners of the young man's mouth, as he looked back to the face of the boy again, and said:

"Well, if I have such a heavy job as that on my hands, I ought

to have given more time to my dumbbells and less to my books before taking this school to teach. But never mind; perhaps I can manage to get inside the schoolhouse; after all; and, if I can't step in, I can fall in."

As he spoke, the youth gave a hitch to his trousers, another glance at the rushing, yelling throng of boys, then approached the little, red-painted schoolhouse, which stood well back from the strip of dusty road.

It was in front of this building that the hostilities between the Sanford and Parksburg boys were in progress.

The affray, if such it could be called, seemed to be subsiding when Jud Fenwick approached.

The boy who had warned him of his danger from flying rocks had followed close at the young man's heels, eyeing the dusty bicycle, with its scratched, dented handle-bars and well-worn tires, with an envious and admiring glance.

There was a small shed near the schoolhouse, and Fenwick ran his bicycle into its shelter, and locked it before doing anything else.

As he returned to the front of the schoolhouse, he came near colliding with an awkward, overgrown youth, who was nearly as old as himself.

This youth had blue eyes, generous ears, a freckled skin, and furzy cheeks.

"You are the new master?" he questioned, after he had seemed to size Fenwick up in a quick, critical glance.



"I have engaged to fill the place. But I suppose it remains to be seen whether I succeed or not," said Fenwick.

He said this in a tone and with an expression of confidence that seemed to strike the big fellow favorably.

"You've put it about right, I guess," the other returned, with a faint smile. "Not that I think the Parksburg fellows will cause you any trouble. The Still River district used to have a hard name, and some of the masters have had a pretty hard row to hoe. But it looks to me as if it was going to be uphill work for any man to teach in this schoolhouse before the row betwixt the two towns is settled."

Fenwick looked at his watch, and saw that it was exactly half-past eight. The contention in the schoolyard seemed to have subsided, and he noticed that more than one-half of the pupils had gone to the east side of the yard, while the others had betaken themselves over to the west side.

The door of the schoolhouse stood ajar, and several windows were open. There was the sound of some one marching heavily to and fro inside.

Yet apparently few, if any, of the boys had yet gone in. As none of the girls were in sight, the young master assumed that they had sought safety in the "hall of learning."

"I had heard something about the dispute," Fenwick said. "But I thought most likely it would turn out to be talk when the day for opening the school arrived."

"It's a good deal more than talk, as you will find out. I am a Parksburg boy myself—probably you didn't notice me when you called on my father to see about gettin' the school last week?"

Just a suspicion of a smile lurked round the homely face of the fellow as he said this. And the smile was reflected upon the face of Fenwick.

"So you are one of the Crockett boys?" the latter asked.

"The top one of the flight," grinned the other. "You know, they call us a pair of stairs—only nine of us in all, so far, running from Andy, which is my name, down to Tad, who has not seen quite three months yet. Tad and me are the most alike in one way—we are both of us pretty green."

"Well, I am not likely to have Tad to look after at present," Fenwick returned.

"Not a great deal, that's a fact. But you may have a chance to trot him on your knee one of these evenings. You know, the master has to board round in the Still River district, so you'll have a week to spend among the Crockett brood. Still, ma doesn't expect the schoolmaster to take care of the baby very much while he is boardin' with us, so you needn't be anxious."

There was a twinkle in the eyes of Andy Crockett as he said this that indicated that there was some kind of a joke behind his remark which he did not care to explain.

"But this isn't what I come out here to tell ye. You see, the schoolhouse really stands on the Parksburg side of the line. But, before the town was divided, the whole of it was known as Sanford, and, as there was some crookedness about the business which nobody seems to understand, the Sanford folks claim that the Still River schoolhouse belongs to them, and that the biggest part of the building is on their side."

"Hasn't there been a survey taken?" Fenwick asked.

"Yes, half a dozen of them, and that's what's the matter. If there hadn't been but one, and the bounds set then, that would have settled the case. But, as it is, there are stones and stakes enough set to show where the line between the towns comes to puzzle a Philadelphia lawyer."

"But where are the original bounds?"

"An imaginary line between two birch trees. The lightning struck one of them and tore it up by the roots, and somebody, by

mistake, cut down the other. Now the bounds are lost, except as some fellers swear that they remember them."

"A queer state of affairs. But I should have thought that the Sanford and Parksburg sides might have settled it without settling the boys on both sides of the line to fighting."

"Oh, the boys always done more or less fightin'—some of them like it better than eatin'. It's just the same with the votin' population, for that matter. The Parksburg and Sanford ends of the town have always done more or less disputing, and that's why they petitioned the legislature to divide the town. But what I have come out here to tell ye was that ye have got somethin' to fight against besides the boys from the other side. I reckon if ye have got plenty of backbone you could fetch them around into line."

The youth seemed to hesitate before telling what was on his mind. For at that point he paused, and seemed to be listening to that measured tread within the schoolhouse. At the same time he raised himself on tiptoe and tried to look in through a window.

Andy Crockett's hesitation and evident uneasiness excited Fenwick's keenest curiosity.

Once more the young man looked at his watch, and there was a decisive ring in his voice, as he said:

"It's ten minutes of nine, Andy, and if I've got a battle to fight, the sooner I get inside and mount my guns, the better."

As he spoke, Fenwick took a resolute stride toward the door. But the hand of the tall youth detained him.

"Wait!" Andy exclaimed. "Sanford has hired a man to teach the school, too. It is he that you hear walking to and fro."

"What! another man been engaged to teach the school?"

"That's just it. T'other is a man of forty-five, if I'm any judge of looks, and he is just the sort to rather lick a boy or crowd him than to eat his dinner."

"I ought to have been told of this before," Fenwick said, a flash in his eye and a sharp ring in his voice.

"There ain't nobody to tell you, since nobody knew it till this morning. He was there when I got here, trampin' back and forth, just as he is now."

"Have you seen him?"

"Only through the window."

"Do you know his name?"

"I heard one of the Sanford boys say it was Crane."

Fenwick recoiled, as if he had been smitten by a blow.

"Crane, you say? And forty-five or fifty years old? How does he look? Tell me that the best you can, Andy Crockett!"

"He's thin, wiry, with a big under jaw and a rim of hair around his head that makes him look like——"

"That's enough. It is Theron Crane, and, if there is a man in the world who hates me and would like to injure me, Theron Crane is that man."

"Well," drawled Crockett, "you'll never have a better chance to cican the row up between ye than you'll have in the line schoolhouse that the Sanfords and Parksburgers are fightin' over."

For the third time, Fenwick glanced at his watch.

"Well, Andy, I suppose you can be counted on as a pupil to-day?" Fenwick asked.

"Ye can count on me and on the whole Crockett flight, down to Dan," grinned Andy.

"Well, troll your brothers in, with as many other Parksburgers as will follow, and I'll try to hold school in one end of the building, even if Theron Crane tries to wield the rod in the other."

With this, Jud Fenwick threw back his shoulders, held up his head in a peculiarly defiant way, and entered the Still River schoolhouse, with all the airs of one who expected to be master.



## CHAPTER II.

## A YOUNG MASTER AND AN OLD ONE.

The Still River schoolhouse was built to accommodate about forty pupils.

Only a few feminine pupils had presented themselves from the Sanford side on this morning when the Still River school was supposed to open its autumn session.

The Parksburg girls, however, were out in full force, and, when Jud Fenwick entered the room, he found them all in their seats. But, as he crossed the threshold, he felt that more than a dozen pairs of anxious eyes were fixed upon him.

Mr. Theron Crane had just come to a pause in his pacing, and was in the act of looking at his watch preparatory to calling the pupils to their seats.

His back was turned to the door, and Fenwick, giving him just a glance and allowing his eyes to sweep over the feminine pupils, stepped quickly and lightly to the small, raised platform upon which was placed the teacher's table and chair.

Without hesitation, Fenwick struck the call bell a double blow, and the emphasis and decision seemed to exemplify the true nature of the young master.

Even as he struck the bell, Andy Crockett, followed by the other five stairs of the Crockett flight, came clumping into the room with a most businesslike clatter.

Mr. Theron Crane wheeled quickly, and his deep-set eyes, opened to their widest extent, fell upon the athletic, youthful figure which had so unexpectedly assumed command of the situation.

The Crocketts were the first to enter their seats, which, according to a country custom, they had chosen at an early hour that morning. They were followed by other boys, who, but a short time before, had been engaged in a rough-and-tumble fight in the yard.

Mr. Theron Crane did not occupy many seconds of time in taking in the situation.

He not only realized that the teacher employed by the Parksburg township had taken possession of the teacher's desk, and so stolen a march on him, but he also recognized the face of his rival.

"Take your seats, please," came from the lips of Fenwick.

All the pupils were actually in their seats at the time. But, with a half glance at Crane, Fenwick made as if he mistook the latter for one of the pupils who was less prompt to come to order than his fellows.

Mr. Crane understood the hit, although he was not quite sure, of course, that Fenwick noticed and recognized him.

With a quicker step than that which he had used in his martial pacing of the room, the Sanford master approached the platform.

Then, for the first time, did Fenwick meet his gaze fairly and squarely.

"Ah, so it's Mr. Crane! I am surprised!" was Fenwick's greeting.

"So it's you!" Crane snapped back, without the slightest pretention of civility.

"So it appears," said Fenwick. "But, if you are going to visit my school on the first day, you would have obliged me if you had waited till I got things into running order. If you will take a seat, you shall have a chance to see how a greenhorn starts in to run a school."

Fenwick still spoke with well-simulated good nature. He was determined that the Still River boys should see that, if there were

any trouble between Crane and himself, the first offensive demonstration came from the older man.

"But I have been employed to teach this school myself, and you will oblige me by stepping down and out!" Crane exclaimed.

"May I ask who hired you for this position?" Fenwick mildly asked.

"The committeemen of Sanford—who should you expect to hire me?"

"May I ask, Mr. Crane, what the town of Sanford has to do with a schoolhouse in the town of Parksburg?"

"The school isn't in Parksburg, as you ought to know."

"I am sorry, Mr. Crane, that what you know and what I know doesn't square any better, but, from the best information that I can get, this is a Parksburg school, and on the Parksburg side. At least, the greatest number of pupils are from Parksburg families."

"As far as I am concerned, it looks to me as if the matter was about as broad as it is long. You were hired by the Parksburg committee, and I came here in good faith to fill my engagement with the Sanford committee. But the merits of the question as it looks to me all favor the Sanford side. In the first place, I am the older man, an experienced teacher, while you are only a boy, a minor, and if the truth were known——"

Theron Crane's malicious eyes were fixed upon the face of Fenwick as he uttered these words, and he suddenly interrupted himself.

The boys, watching the faces of the two men, eager to witness the outcome of this conflict of authority, saw that a slight shade of pallor crossed the cheeks of Fenwick.

At the same time something like a sneer of triumph curled the thin lips of Theron Crane.

"I can't see," said Fenwick, at last, "that this matter can be settled by our arguing over it. And, in the meantime, neither of us are doing the duties for which we were engaged. One thing is certain—more than two-thirds of the pupils are from Parksburg."

"How should I know from which side of the line they come?"

"I think it wouldn't take long for you to satisfy yourself if you were to take a vote. Unless I am mistaken, there isn't a Parksburg boy here who would be willing to be counted on the Sanford side."

"You bet we wouldn't!" came from the back part of the room, about midway up the flight of Crockett stairs.

Fenwick's eyes flashed toward the point from whence this retort came, and he was seen to give a silent shake of the head, which was taken as an injunction to observe silence.

"I must ask you to give up the chair and desk to me without further parleying," said Crane, sharply.

"I will have to decline, when it comes to that. We needn't try to settle the dispute between the two towns, for we couldn't do it if we tried. But, as far as our part of it is concerned, it needn't hinder your taking charge of the Sanford pupils until the matter can be patched up so we shall know who has authority here. I make out about fourteen Sanfordites, all boys, showing. I suppose, that the town is going to be a warlike one. At any rate, Mr. Crane, I'll allow you the use of one end of this building, and lend you my chair and such other utensils as you may need to open school with. If both of us keep good order, I don't see as there is any need of our interfering with each other."

Oddly enough, the unique proposition of Fenwick was actually carried out.

And never before had there been such good order or so many lessons learned upon the first day of school in the Still River district.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE TWINKLE OF LIGHTS.

The dwelling where Fenwick was to spend the first week of his stay in the Still River district stood but a short distance from the schoolhouse.

The latter was invisible from the house, however, on account of the trees which grew between.

As it happened, the family with whom Fenwick was to spend his first week sent only one pupil to the school, and that one was a sweet-faced young girl of not quite sixteen. Her name was Edna Weyman, and her father was one of the most prosperous farmers in the district.

Andy Crockett, who had taken a strong liking to Fenwick, made it in his way to fall in with the latter as they walked homeward.

"What are you going to do about it, Mr. Fenwick?" asked Andy. "If you had really wanted the Parksburg fellers to pitch in and trot that old feller out of the building, I've no doubt but they would turn out and do it for you in fine shape."

"I want nothing of that kind, Andy. And, if any of the Parksburg boys had tried it, they would have had to settle with me, you may be sure of that."

Andy Crockett shrugged his shoulders, and made no reply.

Mr. Andrew Crockett, father of Andy and the rest of the Crockett flight, was rather a quiet sort of man, with a strong will and a streak of obstinacy in his nature.

Since the dispute had arisen between the two towns as to the ownership of the line schoolhouse, the management of the Parksburg side of the affair was left wholly in the hands of Mr. Andrew Crockett.

Fenwick, therefore, in presenting his case to Mr. Crockett, as he did that night, found that it was not entirely plain sailing in that quarter, even.

"I don't know what I can do about it," the man declared, in his short, jerky way.

"Well, what can I do about it?" Fenwick asked.

"Why, it seems to be all plain sailing for you. The town of Parksburg has hired you to teach the Still River school, and you've agreed to do it. So just go ahead. If any of the boys give you any trouble, lick 'em. If you can't lick 'em, expel 'em. That's all there is to do."

"But about the boys from the Sanford side?"

"Don't let 'em come into the schoolhouse. If they come in, put 'em out."

Fenwick was smiling by this time, although his face was averted from the gaze of Mr. Crockett.

"One thing more," said the young master. "What shall I do with Mr. Theron Crane, whom the Sanford people have hired to teach in the Still River district?"

"The Sanford people can't employ a master to teach in a Parksburg school," snapped Mr. Crockett.

"But they have employed one, and he was on the ground to-day, all girdled for the battle. And I'll warrant that he'll be on hand to-morrow morning."

"Well, do as you mind with him. If you can't get rid of him, send me word, and I'll send a constable over. I guess he would go then."

"All right—that's what I wanted you to say. I have no right to lay hands on him, and I wouldn't like it much if he laid hands on me. But, as I am reasonably sure that he will be on hand to-morrow, I hope you will have a constable handy, for I've no doubt but I shall need him."

"You won't have far to go for a constable, if that's what you

want. I'm one myself. To put it straight and fair, Mr. Fenwick, the two ends of the Sanford township have been quarreling for a good many years, and, now that they have been legally separated, if there's to be any trouble, we'll leave off quarreling and take to fighting!"

From the window of his room in the Weyman farmhouse, Fenwick could plainly see the narrow patch of land in front of the schoolhouse, though he could not see the building itself.

The prospect of an exciting time on the morrow made the young man wakeful.

It was considerably past midnight when he slipped out of bed, and, going over to the window, which was open, looked out upon the peaceful night.

There was no moon, and the sky was thickly studded with stars.

As he looked over toward the schoolhouse, he saw several lights which were not stars moving to and fro and zigzagging about in the yard in front of the schoolhouse.

"I believe I'll find out the meaning of this business, just for fun," muttered Fenwick, as he slipped silently into his clothes and slid noiselessly downstairs, unlocked the door and ran swiftly along the dark road toward the twinkling lights.

It was his purpose to get enough money by hook or by crook to pay his way through college.

His encounter with Mr. Theron Crane had recalled something to his mind which he would have liked to forget.

That there was a possibility of Mr. Crane bringing to light a certain episode in Fenwick's past life made the youth rather uncomfortable in his mind.

Jud Fenwick had a life secret of his own which at this time he was very loath to have made known.

For some minutes he stood in the roadway, thinking.

Then he suddenly remembered the lights in the schoolhouse, which he had started out to investigate.

From where he stood, even the yard of the schoolhouse was invisible.

But a few yards further brought him in full view of the yard, and a low ejaculation of amazement escaped his lips.

Fully a dozen men, or boys—if there were any boys among them, they were full-grown—were gathered about the schoolhouse, some of them hurrying to and fro, many of them with lanterns, while out in the road that lay in the direction of Sanford was an ox team.

The team was loaded with some sort of freight, but from that distance, among the shadows, Fenwick could not distinguish what it was.

Concealing himself in the thicket, the young schoolmaster observed the scene with the keenest interest.

It did not take long to understand what they were about to do.

Watching them closely, he was soon able to make out that the boys were the oldest ones from the Sanford side of the line.

The others were men from Sanford, one of whom seemed to be ordering affairs.

A little later, he saw them begin to unload articles from the ox cart.

The first object which they half dragged, half lifted out to the ground Fenwick instantly recognized as an iron jack-screw.

This was followed by several more of the same kind, and then the boys began to unload some large wooden rollers.

Following these came several heavy timbers.

While these articles were being unloaded, several other members of the party were at work around the school building.

"That's a fine scheme, and no mistake—and a bold one!" Fenwick exclaimed, half aloud.



He watched them a few minutes longer, until there could be no doubt about what they intended to do.

Then he started back toward the Weyman dwelling.

The Crocketts lived some distance beyond the Weyman farmhouse, and he decided that Mr. Crockett should be the first to know of his discovery.

Then he realized that the delay necessitated by his going to the Crockett dwelling and notifying them, and so beginning the campaign against the enemy, would give them an opportunity to do considerable damage on the line upon which they had started out.

For Fenwick had seen through their scheme from the instant that he had perceived the first jack-screw being unloaded from the cart.

To settle the doubt as to whether the schoolhouse stood on Sanford or Parksburg land, the enemy had decided to raise the building on jack-screws, and by means of rollers to remove it, beyond peradventure, to Sandford territory.

Fenwick, knowing that if he went to the Crocketts' house he would be too late, moved swiftly and silently back toward the spot from where he had observed the maneuvers of the enemy.

Here he paused for an instant, his brain intensely active, a dozen schemes struggling for recognition in his mind—and every scheme a good one.

"That will delay them, at least!" he exclaimed at last.

In another moment he leaped toward a heap of brush which had been left by some choppers who had been clearing some land along the roadside.

Here he stopped, crouching close to the brush-heap, and a tiny flicker of light gleamed from under his hand.

An instant after, a small blaze was kindled at the base of the brush-heap—a blaze that grew momentarily larger—that sent tiny tongues of flame up through the dry material—higher and higher, until, with a rush and a roar, the whole mass was ablaze!

A chorus of cries of amazement came from the Sanford fellows, but Fenwick determined to lose no time in getting to the house of Crockett.

As he faced about, however, he found himself confronted by two powerful men, both of whom leaped toward him, with loud, signaling shouts!

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### JACKSCREWS.

Although Jud Fenwick had been taken entirely unawares, his assailants did not find it exactly a "picnic" to get the best of him.

Wheeling with lightning quickness, both his small, white fists shot out with a suddenness and precision which taught his enemies something they did not know before.

This something was that it is never safe to assume that you can easily get the best of a fellow because he happens to be a boy.

The blows were struck, to so express it, where they would do the most good. One man was sent staggering backward, and compelled to relinquish his hold entirely. The other, although still clinging to the youth, did so through sheer grit and defiance, for he was nearly blinded by the sudden and terrific blow between the eyes.

Thus momentarily relieved from one of his assailants, Fenwick concentrated all his efforts upon the other.

He followed up his resistance with several swift maneuvers, combining his skill as a wrestler and a boxer in a kind of resistance for which his clumsy foe was wholly unprepared.

Indeed, the young Parksburg schoolmaster seemed to be pretty much alive all over. It seemed to his assailant as if there were half a dozen fists playing about his head and ears, while there

were a like number of feet poking at his legs and making it difficult for him to retain an upright position.

Thus it happened that before the one who had been momentarily beaten off could return to the conflict, the other had been thrown to the ground with such force that he was content to lie very still. So, when the other approached, he found Fenwick so cool, ready and triumphant, both in his manner and position, that he hesitated about repeating an experiment which had turned out so disastrously.

"Now's your chance," said Fenwick, his voice trembling with an excitement which it was hard for him to restrain. "But perhaps you had better call a bigger crowd, for it looks as if two of you wouldn't be enough for me. I don't want to feel that I took a mean advantage of you. I want you to feel that you had a fair show, even if you have to get a dozen more to even it up!"

This taunt was too plain to miss its mark.

The man before him looked a trifle crestfallen as he stood there, trying to stanch the flow of blood from his nostrils, for Fenwick's fist had struck his face plum-center, with the usual results.

"Ye young spy!" the man growled, surveying our hero from head to foot.

"Oh, I can't stop to talk—if you want more of what I gave you, step up and take it like a man!"

"If I only had a club, you young imp!"

"Better get a long one, so you won't have to get too near me. And you had better call up some more of your crowd before you do that, for I should hate to take a mean advantage of a great bunch of bones like you!"

In the meantime the fire which had been ignited was blazing and roaring like a furnace.

The brush heap, which had been left by some choppers, was a large one, and the fuel was as dry as tinder.

Fenwick had observed the direction of the wind before lighting it, and knew that there was not the slightest danger of the fire communicating to the schoolhouse or the uncleared land beyond.

Indeed, the wind blew in just the right direction to carry the heat and smoke directly across the schoolyard, where the men and boys were at work, and even to the place where the ox team was being unloaded.

So intense was the heat that the men had been obliged to concentrate their efforts upon getting the team out of the way, a process which it took some nerve to carry out, since the sparks and small firebrands were flying around them and over their heads in a manner which was uncomfortable, to say the least.

The air was full of shouts, cries, orders, and a few oaths, which proved that it was not a highly moral crowd who had thus attempted to steal a schoolhouse and lug it off at midnight.

As Fenwick ceased speaking, he suddenly turned upon his heel and started up the road at a swift pace.

Ten minutes later he was at the door of the Crockett dwelling, and knocking loudly.

There was a scrambling within, in response to his knock, two or three windows went up, and there was the sound of footsteps on the stairs and in the entryway.

The door was opened almost as quickly as the windows had been, and a head and shoulders was thrust out, confronting Fenwick, while other heads and shoulders protruded themselves from the windows, so that six steps, at least, of the Crockett flight manifested themselves simultaneously, all in ghostly attire.

"Whew! it's Mr. Fenwick," said Andy, who had opened the door.

"Things are rather lively over at the schoolhouse. I thought, perhaps, you might like to know," said Fenwick.

His voice was calm and his speech deliberate.



No one would have suspected from his voice or manner that he had but a short time before been floored by such overpowering excitement.

"What is it? Is that a fire over there? They aren't trying to burn the building up, are they?" asked Andy Crockett.

"No; they are not burning it up—they're hoisting it up!"

"H'istin' it up?"

"On jackscrews. It is simple and easy enough to anybody that knows how."

"What's this you're telling me, Mr. Fenwick? Are ye sure you are in your right mind? Or did your first day in the Still River school upset your wits a little?"

"Say, down there!" came from one of the windows above. "I guess the schoolhouse is on fire. I can see the smoke and lights from here."

Following this announcement, every head which had protruded from the windows were withdrawn, while there was a thumping of bare heels on the floor and scrambling over chairs, and other sounds which indicated the hasty putting on of trousers by half a dozen boys.

Andy had abruptly terminated his talk with Fenwick at the door, and, forgetting all the rules of civility, dodged into the house to get into some attire more suitable in color and more adequate as to length than that which he had on at that moment.

## CHAPTER V.

### FACE TO FACE WITH AN OLD ENEMY.

Within an almost incredibly short time there were six Crocketts, all in fighting array, pouring forth from the Crockett house. Five of them were steps in the Crockett flight, while the sixth was the father of the little regiment.

Fenwick had already explained the red flare and dense smoke which they could see rising in the vicinity of the Still River schoolhouse.

The heap of fuel must by this time have been nearly consumed, for the reddish glow had subsided, and only a faint column of smoke could be seen rising against the sky.

Crockett started off down the road at a determined pace, and looking as if he had worked himself into a warlike frame of mind.

Fenwick stepped back to say a few words to Andy.

"It may be easy to drive them out this time," said the young master, "but the next time they make a trial, look out!"

"Do you think there'll be any chance to have school to-morrow?" Andy asked.

"That's more than I can say. I shall try to be on hand, and, unless the building gets moved across the line, I shan't allow any of the Sanford boys inside of it."

A moment later they were as near the building as they could approach without being seen.

Fenwick and Andy went ahead, keeping out of sight, and soon they were looking out upon the men, boys, and lanterns which were once more moving busily about the Still River schoolhouse.

Fenwick's bonfire had died down to a heap of embers. The ox team had been driven farther up the road, away from the smoking heap. The driver was just in the act of fetching the team nearer the building, and the work of dragging the timbers and jackscrews to the schoolhouse was going rapidly on.

It looked as if the Sanford crowd intended to get things well under way at least before daylight.

Still, the delay which Fenwick's trick had caused them would render it impossible for them to get the building into a position to move before morning.

Neither could they carry on the work without its coming to the knowledge of the Parksburg people. So that they must encounter resistance was a dead certainty.

The elder Crockett observed their movements from his place of concealment only a moment before taking active action.

He was seen to boldly approach the Sanford crowd, and there was an instant cessation of voices.

Fenwick, watching the affair with intense but quiet interest, and listening to the exchange of words between the elder Crockett and the leader of the Sanford crowd, was suddenly aroused by the touch of a hand upon his arm.

He turned slowly, supposing it to be Andy. But, in the dim light that came from the sky, he recognized the thin, dark face of the worst enemy he had in the world—Theron Crane!

"Don't be alarmed Judson," came in the low, hoarse tones of Mr. Theron Crane, as the eyes of the rival schoolmasters met.

"Was there anything you wished to say to me?" Fenwick demanded.

"I thought there might be something that you would wish to say to me."

"You were mistaken. At least, I would say nothing that you would care to hear."

"I suppose you brought good recommendations to the town of Parksburg when you applied for the position of teacher?" Mr. Crane questioned, in his sneering tones.

"I suppose that is an affair wholly between the Parksburg school committee and myself, Mr. Crane."

"So it is, young man. But, if there were certain points of information which they ought to know, and which you held back, don't you think that somebody ought to give them some light on the matter?"

"Maybe it's somebody's duty, but not yours, Mr. Crane."

"Why not?"

"Because it's none of your business. If that isn't plain enough, how can I speak any plainer?"

Mr. Crane recoiled slightly under this low, yet firmly spoken, retort, and, if there had been light enough, a flash of anger might have been seen in his eyes.

Fenwick had looked swiftly about him, wondering what had become of Andy Crockett. The latter had been with him but a moment before, and why he had so suddenly disappeared, and this phantom of blackness slipped into his place, was more than the young schoolmaster could account for.

"Wouldn't it be well for you to be a little careful in your speech, Judson Fenwick?" Crane exclaimed, a sibilant wheeze in his tone, which indicated the intensity of his hatred for the youth.

"I think, Mr. Crane, that the time for all complimentary speech between us is over. You know and I know that we both cordially hate each other, and I know that nothing would please you more than to have me get into some kind of serious trouble. So what's the use in our picking over our words in talking with each other? Why not be frank for once, and at least save time?"

"There's not a bit of doubt but you're frank enough, Judson!"

"Well, what do you want to say to me? I'm here and you're here, and I suppose you mean to crowd me?"

"I want to warn you, that's all. I'm sure you can't accuse me of being unfriendly in that."

"Well, what's the warning?"

"Simply that you can't expect me to give up my authority in the Still River school to you. You can't expect it, Judson."

"Is that all, Mr. Crane?"

"I simply wish to give you a chance to leave this town—to get



away from this locality—to make sure that you will never come between me and anything I wish to do!"

"Is that all, Mr. Crane?"

"That's the whole of my warning."

"Then I don't see but we're through talking."

Jud Fenwick actually turned his back as he uttered these words and started toward the footpath by which he and Andy had entered the thicket.

Once more he felt the cold, clammy palm of Theron Crane upon him. And this time it grasped his wrist and held him back.

With a lightning movement, Fenwick shook off that grasp, and, wheeling about once more, faced his enemy, his eyes blazing with passion, his form again trembling with a feeling which was fast making him forget his good resolution.

"Don't you lay hands on me again, Theron Crane! Remember that you are not a tutor here in this place, nor I a pupil!"

Crane again recoiled, and it was plain that he was afraid the youth might strike him.

Indeed, he stood in an attitude which showed a readiness to spring away if the other showed any signs of a hostile demonstration.

"Be careful, young man! Be very careful!" wheezed Crane.

"Then keep your distance! I won't have you touch me! I am not obliged to, and I won't do it. If you don't let me alone, I won't be responsible for the consequences!"

"Since you won't be reasonable, young man, suppose I tell the Parksburg committee the whole story? Look here! what if I were to mention the fact that you were here under your real name, pretending to be respectable and setting yourself up as a teacher of youth and a moral example, and all that sort of thing—what if I were to tell all this to a man who came to the Sanford hotel last night and put up there as a guest?"

"Your tale is so far-fetched, Mr. Crane, that I must confess that I can't make head or tail out of it. I am here under my real name, and I am going to try and teach the Still River school. The rest of it I don't understand."

"You don't understand about the man that put up at the Sanford hotel?"

"That's the part that is obscure to me."

"I dare say. Suppose, then, I say that the man comes from the city of Buffalo, in the State of New York?"

Fenwick's eyes were fixed with an intense look upon the face of the man before him. His lips were compressed, and for a moment he was silent. He had been so pale ever since the beginning of the interview that the present excitement could not increase his pallor.

And yet it is true that this last remark of Theron Crane came as a shock to the feelings of the young schoolmaster.

"Well, what of the man from Buffalo?" he asked, his voice for the first time being a little husky.

"I'll put it plain, Judson. I'll prove to you that I really wish to do you a good turn. I was not obliged to warn you. I was not obliged to let you know of your danger, and so have let you fall into the trap which was almost sure to be laid for you. I haven't told the man from Buffalo that you are here, and, if you only leave the town, and do not interfere with me any more, maybe I'll keep quiet about it."

"Who is this man from Buffalo?" Fenwick repeated.

"It is not a matter so much of who as what? The man is an officer—a detective—and he is looking for a young man who—"

Up went the back of Fenwick's hand. It was not clinched this time; the palm was open, and the back of that hand smote Mr. Theron Crane stingingly across the lips.

## CHAPTER VI.

### FISHING FOR FACTS.

It is easy to explain what had become of Andy Crockett.

While Jud Fenwick had been watching the scene in the school-yard, Andy had noticed what seemed to be the glimmer of a lantern moving among the trees at a little distance.

So near was it that, if he had spoken of the matter to Fenwick, the person carrying the lantern could not have failed to hear.

Therefore he silently started in pursuit, taking long, swift strides, for which the length of his legs was admirably adapted.

As Andy Crockett advanced, the faster he moved, the more swiftly moved the light. It popped up and down, as though it was carried in the hand of a man, yet, although Andy's ears were by no means dull, he could hear no sound of footsteps in front of him.

Andy took little heed of the course he was pursuing.

Indeed, it would have been impossible for him to have done so, for, except for the stars overhead, his course lay through almost absolute darkness.

This fact made it impossible for him to move with great rapidity. The glimmer of the lantern was all he had for a guide, and that was barely sufficient to show him the outlines of the trees which intervened.

On and on he ran, stumbling over fallen trees, entangling his big feet in the thick growing undergrowth—now and then coming in forcible contact with a tree trunk—occasionally losing sight of the light, and then plunging forward yet more recklessly, with the purpose of getting a glimpse of it again.

This sort of a chase, without knowing what he was chasing, could not endure forever.

Andy had good grit, although at times his brains were a little slow. It dawned upon him at last that he was leaving his companions a good way behind, and that he was plunging into what might be the depths of a tract of forest which he knew extended for several miles away from the river.

Whether he had been going in a straight line or not he had no means of knowing, but presently he met with a surprise. He found that he was going down a slope, that the trees grew farther and farther apart, and that, fast as he had gone, the light was farther off than it had been when he had started the pursuit.

Now that the way was clearer, he was able to see more plainly, and so to make more rapid progress. And right here he met with another surprise. With two surprises, in fact, which was almost more than Andy Crockett's brain could take in in a moment.

First, the light which he had been following went out. That was all there seemed to be to it. It did not go up or down, nor along, but simply out.

The other surprising thing was that he found himself stumbling headlong downward, his feet having become entangled in a trailing vine, and, the slope becoming so steep that he could not recover his equilibrium. And, as a climax to this double surprise, he found himself plunged headlong into water.

Andy Crockett was a good swimmer, but, as he had been plunged into the water somewhat after the fashion of a frog, it was some seconds before he could strike out with anything like grace or effectiveness.

When he came to the surface, he was not at a loss to locate himself, though he had been a little bewildered at first. In following the strange light, he had gone in a semi-circular course, and brought up on the bank of Still River—or, more properly, in Still River itself.

With his heavy boots, and hampered by clothing, Andy could



not get to swimming in good shape at once, and, as the current of the stream at that point was quite swift, he had all he could do to keep himself from drifting down the stream.

As soon as he had fairly gotten his bearings his curiosity was again excited by the sight of the light—for he was sure that it was the same one—which had led him such a tantalizing and disastrous chase through the woods.

This time he had no trouble in locating it.

It came from the stern of a rowboat, and the boat itself was coming toward him, propelled by a pair of oars.

The boat had two occupants. One plied the oars while the other sat in the stern and directed the course of the craft with the steering oar.

Before Andy even had time to conjecture about it the boat and its occupants had swept along beside him, the oars ceased beating the water, and the oarsmen leaned over the edge of the craft and said in a firm yet not unmusical voice:

"Well, do you want to get in out of the wet, young man?"

"I don't mind," said Andy, blowing out a mouthful of river water, whale fashion.

Without further remarks on either side the oarsmen leaned to the opposite side of the boat to keep it in an upright position while Andy clambered in. In another moment the craft was put in motion again and directed across the stream.

"I guess you are headed the wrong way," Andy Crockett observed as soon as he could get breath.

"I guess not," the stranger returned, as he continued to pull with strong, steady strokes.

Andy's eyes were becoming sufficiently accustomed to the dark by this time to enable him to make out the face of the stranger with tolerable distinctness.

He was a youngish man, somewhere in the thirties, perhaps, with a dark, closely-cropped beard, good features, a pair of sharp eyes, and a bicycle cap which shaded his face.

He wore a general outing suit and Andy judged that he might be rather a trim-looking fellow on the whole. His first impression was that he was a summer sojourner from Boston or New York.

"But I belong on the other side," declared Andy, and though he paid all due respect to city gentlemen and summer sojourners, his tone lacked no decisiveness on that account.

"I took it by the way you plunged into the river that you wanted to swim across," the stranger said.

"You made a mistake. When a fellow tumbles off that way it ain't always a sign that he ain't satisfied with the land he tumbles off of," returned Andy.

The stranger smiled faintly and it seemed to occur to him that after all this awkward young country fellow might not be lacking in brains.

"You won't mind going over to the other side, will you?"

"I seem to be going whether I mind it or not."

"But if I agree to carry you back in a little while it will be all right, won't it?"

"I didn't say so. But I would rather like to know why you are so set on taking me over there?"

"Because my boat is going that way and I am not quite ready to land on the other side. Moles, over there in the stern, never changes his course unless I tell him to. He always does just as I tell him."

"So that is Moles, is it?" Andy exclaimed.

As he spoke he leaned toward the youth whose back was toward him, and who seemed to be wholly absorbed in the work of keeping the course of the boat perfectly straight.

Andy knew that Moles was a Sanford boy who had belonged

in the old Still River district. He was a queer sort of a fellow, by no means simple minded, though some took him to be so until they found out their mistake.

He was a short, thickset fellow, with a round, smooth, stupid face and goggle eyes. He had a queer impediment of speech which made him pronounce his words as some men do when they are intoxicated. And when he walked it was with a shambling, staggering sort of gait like that of a drunken man.

Those who had known Moles' father and his dissipated habits, easily accounted for this peculiarity in the son. And yet Moles was rather a shrewd and crafty fellow, very faithful to his friends.

While Andy Crockett was making these observations the boat was being propelled in an oblique course across the river.

He had little time to remonstrate against being landed on the opposite shore before the prow of the little craft bumped against the shelving bank.

In his plunge into the stream Andy had lost his hat. The man sprang ashore and held onto the painter, saying:

"We have reached port, my friend, and we might as well go ashore and see the sights."

Andy leaped out of the boat, not because he had been requested to do so, but because he had not yet made up his mind what to do. He wondered who this man was and what he was driving at, and it was curiosity to have an explanation on these points that led him to yield so readily to the other's request.

Moles secured the boat, and Andy, having made up his mind what to do, faced the stranger and said:

"I guess I have gone about as far as I'm going until I know who you are and what you want of me."

"My name is Mr. Tiffany, and for the present I am stopping in Sanford," was the prompt reply.

"That's all right, but it isn't telling what you want of me."

"I can't tell that all in a word."

"I aren't so particular as to the number of words you use, if you only tell it straight. I was fool enough to chase either you or your man with the lantern through the woods, and so got my tumble into the river. You were good enough to pick me up, but you act just a little mite foggy, and I aren't going to hang round here all night, for I have something else on my mind."

"I won't detain you long, young man. I take it that you and the young Parksburg schoolmaster were out together?"

Tiffany was leaning over and groping in the bottom of the boat, as though searching for something, as he carelessly uttered this query. Yet he did not catch Andy Crockett napping.

"So it's something about the Parksburg schoolmaster that you're fishing after, is it?" drawled Andy.

Somehow Tiffany forgot all about what he was searching for in the bottom of the boat. He straightened up and looked directly into Andy Crockett's face.

"You're rather sharp for a back country boy, aren't you?" he asked.

"Just about the average."

"Well, what objections can you have to telling me about the young schoolmaster?"

"No more objections than I would have to telling anybody else about him."

"What objection have you to telling anybody?"

"Just the objection that I aren't much of a hand to talk about people anyway. And certainly you wouldn't find many Parksburg fellows that would want to talk to a man that was puttin' up at Sanford. Come over to Parksburg and you'll get among decent people. But as long as you stay in Sanford you will find that



you'll get the cold shoulder on this side of the line. And don't you think you won't."

"You're altogether too touchy about this quarrel between the two towns, young man. I don't care for either; but I would like to see your young schoolmaster, and I would like to have you tell me something about him."

"I guess you'll have to ask somebody else," said Andy.

"But I must know."

"You'll have to ask somebody else. I aren't talkin'; now just listen and see if you can hear me talkin'."

Andy closed his lips tight, and although Mr. Tiffany tried his best to surprise the youth into making some sort of a response, his attempt was all in vain.

Andy would only shake his head, and the soft murmur of the stream as it chafed against the sloping bank disclosed as many secrets as did Andy Crockett.

Just at this moment the splash of oars again sounded in the stream, and another boat bumped against the bank and somebody else sprang out of it. And this somebody hauled the boat up so that it would not drift down the current and then wheeled suddenly and started at a swift run down the shore. So blind and hurried were this person's movements that he almost ran squarely into the arms of Tiffany.

It was Fenwick, the young Still River schoolmaster!

## CHAPTER VII.

### FENWICK MAKES A FRIEND.

Mr. Tiffany's arms, which were both long and strong, closed about Fenwick's figure.

For an instant they stood thus, Fenwick staring into the face of the man who was holding him so tightly.

That the collision was purely accidental on both sides each knew perfectly well.

So, while he muttered an apology, the young schoolmaster at the same time attempted to relieve himself from the other's grasp.

Tiffany released his hold slightly in the matter of tightness, but he at the same time seized the youth's arms in a manner which made his grip all the more secure.

"Why are you in such a hurry, pray?" he asked.

"I don't know as that's a matter I'm obliged to explain."

"But, you see, Mr. Fenwick, I feel that you owe me an explanation as well as an apology," persisted Tiffany, still in that mild, plausible tone.

These words went like fire to the brain of the youth.

"I have tried to be gentlemanly; but if you're a tramp or a highwayman, I shall have to get onto a different tack!" exclaimed the young schoolmaster.

And this time he put forth all his strength in an effort to break away from the man's grasp.

And in that moment he discovered that Mr. Tiffany was an extraordinarily strong man.

"I don't like to be rude," Tiffany said, while the other vainly struggled. "But I really couldn't think of letting you go until you had told me something about yourself."

The harder Fenwick struggled the tighter clung the hands of the stranger.

Moles and Andy Crockett stood at a little distance, watching the struggle with an interest and excitement which they showed in different ways.

As he saw that Fenwick was struggling desperately against his assailant, Andy came to a decision.

His long legs lifted him over the space which intervened with two or three strides.

And before either Fenwick or Tiffany observed his nearness his long right arm straightened and his big right fist alighted upon the head of the stranger right back of that gentleman's left ear.

Tiffany's grip upon Fenwick was relinquished, and while a harsh ejaculation burst from his lips, the man staggered backward, throwing up his arms in a spasmodic effort to retain his equilibrium.

And just at this time luck seemed to be against Mr. Tiffany.

For his foot caught in a trailing vine and he made a plunge very similar to that made by Andy on the opposite side, the only difference being that the stranger nearly made a back somersault down the sloping bank of the river, and landing with a tremendous splash which might easily have been heard on the opposite side if there had been ears to hear.

"Sink or swim, he'll learn something," said Andy as Fenwick turned to face his defender.

"You, Andy!" exclaimed the young schoolmaster.

"Yes, the whole of me and all right as soon as I get dried off. But if you don't want anything to do with that fellow again you had better take to the boat and move on. He is slick enough to look at, but he has got too much curiosity to suit me."

"Come then, Andy, I don't want to make that fellow's acquaintance, not just yet. I am sorry you hit him, though. Troubles seem to be falling on me all in a heap."

Fenwick returned to the boat from which he had just disembarked and sprang into it, letting Andy push it into the stream without saying a word.

Fenwick took up the oars, and he speedily showed that he knew how to use them. Directing the boat down the stream, they were sent speeding along the current of the river under the impetus of Fenwick's strong arms at a rate which soon left the scene of their adventure out of sight.

Not until they had passed a bend in the river where there was no possibility of either Tiffany or Moles observing them, did Andy or Fenwick speak again.

Andy, sitting in the stern, had seen Tiffany drag himself out of the river and up the bank, and then heard him give some order to Moles. And just as they had passed out of their sight he saw the other boat push out and knew that both Tiffany and his companion were in it.

"Like enough they will follow us," Andy remarked at last.

"Let them try it."

"I guess Mr. Tiffany hasn't any business with you when it comes to warrin' a pair of oars, Mr. Fenwick."

"He hasn't any business with you, Andy, when it comes to using fists."

"I didn't give him a chance to show what he could do in that line. It kind of struck me that he hadn't any right to hang onto you, and I reckoned you didn't have a very good chance to strike for yourself. But I suppose there will be a big row, for that man, with all his slick tongue and good looks, has it in him to be as ugly as sin, unless I'm a good deal mistaken."

"Have you seen him before to-night?"

"Never before."

"How did you happen to be with him?"

Andy briefly explained.

"So you were following something, too, and that was what got you into difficulty?" said Fenwick.

"It was nothing but Mr. Tiffany's lantern—or rather Moles was carrying it and Tiffany must have been some distance ahead. I take it that they were hangin' round near the schoolhouse watching for something."

"Watching for me," muttered Fenwick, as he bent eagerly to



his work and sent the boat over the eddying surface of the stream with birdlike swiftness.

"I guess they were poking round after you. I suppose you know why, Mr. Fenwick, but I don't."

"I think I know," said Fenwick.

For ten minutes they kept on, but nothing was seen of their pursuers, and Fenwick put into shore and the two landed.

The young schoolmaster flung himself down under the spreading branches of an old oak and half reclined there for a few minutes in silence.

Then he said:

"You have proved yourself a pretty good friend to me, Andy, and I'm going to tell you something."

And Fenwick told his story. Andy was so absorbed in it that it was like being awakened from a dream when Fenwick said at last:

"Now, unless you don't wish to be seen in my company we'll go back to Parksburg."

"I guess I'll risk it," said Andy, and the two friends went back to the Crockett dwelling, reaching it a little before dawn.

Not until morning was Mr. Crockett informed concerning the outcome of his interference in the proceedings at the Still River schoolhouse.

"There wa'n't anybody there that had any authority from the town of Sanford, so they didn't try to make any kind of a show when I told them what was what," Mr. Crockett declared in answer to Fenwick's inquiries.

"Then they didn't get the schoolhouse started on its travels?"

"Not a bit of it. They left their traps there, though; and though they didn't say very much, I'm afraid we haven't seen the last of it. But I don't believe the Sanford schoolmaster will trouble you any to-day, and you'll have the whole school if there's any school."

"That's what I want, and I'm ready to guarantee that there will be a school," said Fenwick, decisively.

He was a little pale that morning as he mounted his wheel and rode for two or three miles directly away from the schoolhouse to work off his waste steam, as he expressed it.

He got around to the schoolhouse just-in season, left his wheel in the shed as he had done the morning before, and went to his desk as calm as if he expected nothing to happen.

To his satisfaction he saw that none but Parksburg pupils had presented themselves.

Neither was he greeted by the sneering face of Mr. Theron Crane.

At the midday intermission Fenwick called the boys together and proposed to them a scheme for inaugurating a series of athletic sports under his direction and instruction.

This was a decided innovation in the country school, and within twenty minutes Jud Fenwick had as many stanch friends in the Still River district as there were boys.

Nor were the girls left out by any means. Games and exercises suited to them, also, were planned and suggested, while a proposition was made to Mr. Weyman and Mr. Crockett, backed by Fenwick, which promised to give new light and life to the somewhat lonely and prosy locality.

So warmly and with such eloquence did Fenwick plead his case that Mr. Weyman promised to consult with several of the more prosperous men in the district, and, if possible, to carry the scheme through.

As the affair called for some expenditure of cash, there was likely to be many objections, for ready money comes hard in a farming district, as a rule.

"Of course it would be out of the question to get one for every

member of the club for the present at least," said Fenwick to Mr. Crockett, who promised to be one of the last to yield to this scheme. "But it wouldn't be a hard matter for half a dozen of you who seem to be more prosperous to subscribe, say twenty-five dollars apiece, and so give the thing a start."

"I can see that you come from a part of the country where they think that dollars grow on bushes," said Crockett.

"They were always rather scarce on the trees in my father's yard," was Fenwick's response.

"Yet you're dressed better than my boys ever were; you have a bicycle and most everything else that you seem to want or take a notion to."

"You don't begin to know, Mr. Crockett, the things I take a notion to that I don't have. As for my bicycle, I came by that rather handily. It wasn't a new one at that, and I can buy plenty more just like it to-day, as second-hand wheels, for twenty-five or thirty dollars apiece. And up here where any kind of a wheel, except a cart wheel, is a rarity, half a dozen like mine would give an awful lot of sport to the Still River boys and girls."

"And say nothing of the broken legs and arms, I suppose?" said Crockett.

"Nothing so bad as that, Mr. Crockett. A few scraped shins would probably be the worst of it. But the beginners wouldn't want to wear their Sunday clothes. But there's one side of the question that you haven't thought of at all."

"Well, I guess you have thought on't sure enough," was the retort.

"I guess I have. If I haven't thought of points enough, I think I can scrape up some more by giving a little time to it."

"Well, what was the point that you thought would be such a strong one with me?"

"Why, pride in your town and district. Now, I went through Sanford the other day, and the nearest thing I saw to a bicycle in the whole town was an old velocipede which some youngsters were fooling with."

"I guess that's so," said Crockett.

"So if you want to put the Still River district in the way of civilization and make the Sanford girls and boys green with envy, you want to set your boys and girls to spinning round on bicycles, and show them that Parksburg, now that she has thrown off the shackles of the old town, means to come right along up to date."

Within half an hour the elder Crockett was completely won over. Hastily drawing up a paper Fenwick got the father of the Crockett flight to subscribe for seventy-five dollars before he had time to cool off or think better of it.

Just before it was time to close Fenwick announced his plan of forming a bicycle club, and nearly took the pupils out of their seats by declaring that the purchase of half a dozen of moderate priced, yet serviceable wheels, was assured.

A breathless silence followed this announcement, which was broken at last by Edna Weyman, who, with her pretty face covered with blushes, rose to call for a cheer for the new master of the Still River district.

She did not have to call a second time. And for the first time Jud Fenwick found it difficult to restore order.

After school had been dismissed and all had filed forth from the building, Fenwick lingered behind.

Andy Crockett paused at the door to ask:

"Aren't you coming, Mr. Fenwick?"

"Pretty soon. But you go with the rest. I want a little time to myself."



"I guess you've earned it, if anybody has," said Andy, and his long legs soon took him beyond the bend in the road.

No sooner was he out of sight than Fenwick went back into the wide entryway.

Seizing hold of a pile of wood which had been left there from last year, and which they would soon need to use in warming the schoolhouse on chilly mornings, Fenwick gave a quick, powerful pull, then sprang out of the way of the falling pile.

"There, now come out and show yourself a man if you are one!" he exclaimed. For Mr. Tiffany, the mysterious stranger, had been standing behind the pile of wood!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A TREACHEROUS BLOW.

Mr. Tiffany, the mysterious stranger who was sojourning at Sanford, and who had taken such a singularly deep interest in Fenwick, stepped forth from his place of concealment as calmly and matter of fact as if nothing out of the ordinary course of events had happened.

"You are really sharper than I thought," he said, with a faint smile as Fenwick confronted him.

There was a flash of anger in the eyes of the young schoolmaster, and a scornful curl on his lips as he gazed into the face of the self-possessed stranger.

"Now, say your say and be done with it," said Fenwick.

"Is your time so precious then that you can't spend half an hour with me?" Tiffany asked.

"My time is too precious to spend it talking with spies. But there is one thing I will mention. It's lucky for you that I didn't let on to the boys that you were hiding behind that woodpile before they went."

"Lucky for me, was it?"

"Rather lucky, yes. The average boy, if he has decent stuff in him, even in the back-country like this, hates anything that is underhanded. So unless I had used my authority in your defense you might have received pretty rough handling."

"That's so," admitted Tiffany, with a faint smile. "But generally I'm not much afraid of boys. Probably it's because I have seen so many of them and I know that their bark is usually worse than their bite."

"What do you want to see me for? I take it that you wouldn't have sneaked in behind that woodpile and stood cooped up there in such an uncomfortable position for so long unless you had wanted to see me pretty bad."

"I'm just interested in you, that's all. And there's no way that you can learn more about anybody than by watching them when they don't know they're being watched."

"Well, did you get paid for your trouble?"

"I got paid for my trouble."

"Then, perhaps, you don't wish to talk with me any more this afternoon?"

"On the contrary, I never wanted to see you more than I do now."

"Then why don't you talk? I suppose you want to ask me some questions? You want to pry into my private affairs in some way?"

"Just a little, Mr. Fenwick, if you don't mind. For one thing, I would like to know how long since you took it into your head to be a pedagogue?"

"Not a very great while, Mr. Tiffany. Just as soon as I took it into my head I became one. Anything else?"

"I don't suppose you thought that your friends in Buffalo would be interested enough in you to follow you this distance?"

"I didn't know that I had any friends in Buffalo," returned Fenwick, with a bitterness of tone which betrayed more feeling than it was really prudent for him to show.

"But you don't deny that you came from Buffalo?"

"I don't affirm it."

"But since you're so chary about talking about yourself, doesn't that imply that you're afraid of something?"

"It implies nothing of the sort. It simply implies that I have started out to make my own living, to live straight, and to keep a curbed bit on my temper. All I want is a fair chance and a little time, and nobody will ever have a cause to regret knowing me—at least not here at Still River."

Mr. Tiffany was cying the young man closely as he uttered these words.

"Is that all you have to say to me?" Fenwick asked.

"Not quite all. Last night when you run into my arms and I held you in a sort of playful way you didn't seem inclined to take it as a joke at all."

"But it didn't look much like a joke to me. It was about as much of a joke as was that clip beside the head that Andy gave you—and how did you like that?"

"Oh, it fitted pretty snug," said Tiffany, with a faint smile, and he poked the forefinger of his left hand up behind his left ear, where, hidden under his slouch hat, there was a spot which was decidedly sore even yet.

"Most anybody would fight against being held in the fashion in which you gripped me last night," said Fenwick.

"What will happen the next time I spy on you?"

"Wait and see. But just bear in mind that I won't put up with it tamely. I have had enough to contend with, and expect to have enough in the future, without having to feel that there are unfriendly eyes watching my every movement and unfriendly ears listening to my every word. I don't know what in the world you want of me, but I take it that you're a friend of Mr. Theron Crane or to somebody else who isn't a friend to me."

Fenwick's bitterness of tone increased as he went on. It was evident that he was trying hard to keep down an outburst of passion. And Mr. Tiffany, listening and watching, was more puzzled by the youth's manner than ever before.

"There's something about this fellow that I don't quite understand," said Tiffany, mentally. "I don't want to do him an injustice, and while some points look rather dark against him, there are others which do not quite tally with what I expected to find. If he wasn't quite so suspicious of me perhaps I might get on better."

Such was the character of Tiffany's mental comment as he stood looking into the pale, resolute face of the young Still River schoolmaster.

"Perhaps," said Tiffany, speaking slowly, as if he was making up his mind as he spoke the words. "I'll let you alone for a little while and see how things sail along."

"And spy on me in the meantime, I suppose?"

"Perhaps—perhaps not. There are some things about you that I don't understand, and it sometimes comes over me that I may be making a mistake. Young man, in spite of the harsh things you have said of me, and the harsher ones you have thought, if I found I had done you an injustice in any way, no person in the world would be quicker to acknowledge it, and no person in the world would be quicker to wipe out the fault."

And Tiffany, in that moment, in voice, speech and looks, seemed to be transformed into another being. And Fenwick, looking at his face, had a strange impulse come over him—an impulse which prompted him to leap forward, reach out his right hand and beg that this man might hear his story—might



judge him in the light of the whole truth—then that he might be friend.

Such was the impulse which rose within the breast of Jud Fenwick. But he did not utter it. His voice was changed, however, as he said:

"Spy on me all you please, Mr. Tiffany. And in the meantime I'll go on about my work and keep the curbed bit drawn tight."

Tiffany smiled, bowed and went out, leaving Fenwick alone.

The young master closed the door and went to his desk in the schoolroom.

More time had elapsed in that interview that he had dreamed of. The sun had sunk behind the trees on the western slope, and a sort of twilight pervaded the room. Fenwick stood at his table, seemingly absorbed in thought. In the meantime it grew rapidly darker and he rose to go out.

As he did so something seemed to come between his eyes and the wall of the room, and then there was a sudden shock to his senses, with a dreadful pain which seemed to run through his body from head to feet.

Then Jud Fenwick knew no more!

## CHAPTER IX.

### FENWICK'S TURN.

When Jud Fenwick returned to sensibility the first things of which he was conscious were the murmur of voices and a rocking motion of the surface upon which he was lying.

Fenwick instantly comprehended that the restless surface upon which he was lying was the bottom of a boat, against the sides of which he could hear the murmur of the water, while the splash of oars, dipped slowly, became more distinct as he became more alert.

His first impulse was naturally to sit up. But on second thought, as the murmur of voices became more distinct, he decided to make the best of his opportunity to listen.

"He hasn't any friends around here, and they won't make much of a search for him right away," said one voice in a squeaky tone.

"There is one reason why they won't look for him," said the other.

"What is that?"

"They'll think he skipped out on his own hook."

"Why is that?"

"Because most of them know that Mr. Tiffany, as he calls himself, who has been hanging around here, is watching him, and that the young Still River schoolmaster has a secret of his own of which he is mighty anxious not to let out a hint."

"I didn't know about that. I heard somebody say something about Mr. Tiffany's stopping up to the hotel at Sanford Center, and everybody was wondering what he was hanging round here for, as it is later than summer boarders generally choose to come up this way. But I didn't know as he had anything to do with the young Still River schoolmaster."

"I didn't know it myself till to-night. It seems that this Tiffany has been hanging round looking for somebody, and although he gave no names he asked questions in such a way that it got noised abroad that the one he was inquiring for tallied pretty well with young Fenwick. Then Mr. Crane, whom the Sanford people hired to come and teach the Still River school, picked the thing up, and he had some talk with this Mr. Tiffany right away. I seen them walking down under the Sanford elms together as friendly as a pair of brothers."

"Then you think Crane knows something about this fellow?"

"Oh, that's sure enough. They have met before, and they don't love each other none to speak of, I can tell you that."

As may well be imagined, this conversation was all very interesting to the youth who was lying in the bottom of the boat.

From what he had heard he inferred that there were only two persons in the boat beside himself, and from their voices he judged that they were men rather than boys.

There was a dull pain in his head as a reminder of the blow by which he had been struck down.

With his eyes wide open and staring upward, he could only see the sky overhead, with the clouds racing across the dark background, and the stars peering out here and there and blinking down at him from behind their fleecy veils.

A gusty breeze was blowing downstream, causing the boat to rock quite violently, and further impeding the progress of the rowers.

The oarsmen bent to their work more laboriously than they had done before, and at last one of them said:

"Here's the place. Shall I steer around to the other side?"

"Yes, so as to strike it from above. There isn't much danger of our being noticed at this time of night, and not much in the daytime. Still, it's best to be on the safe side."

"Here goes, then."

A few minutes more of silence, and then Fenwick could tell that the boat was veering in its course, and a little later it came to a stop with a grating sound.

He saw the face of a man bending over him.

"So you've waked up, have you?" the man asked in a gruff tone.

"You didn't expect me to sleep all night, did you?" Fenwick returned in a matter-of-fact tone, as if his situation was the most ordinary one in the world.

"Not quite that. But we're going ashore now. Do you feel too stiff to walk?"

Fenwick was surprised that they should ask him such a question as that. He had not thought that they would allow him so much liberty as to go on his own feet.

"I don't know yet, but I can soon tell," he answered.

In an instant he was upon his feet. But as soon as he arose he realized that his head was very heavy, and he felt as if the boat was going out from under him.

He swung his arms about frantically for a moment, and then sunk down to a sitting posture with a suddenness which caused the men to laugh.

"Guess you need a little help. You aren't used to drinking so much, and it plays on the legs."

Fenwick gave no sign as to whether he appreciated the joke or not. He passively allowed them to lift him up and help him out of the boat. They led him along a path thickly lined on either side with trees and shrubbery.

He barely had time to observe that they had landed him upon an island in the middle of the river, where the latter was broader than at any other point which he had yet observed.

The island was a tiny speck of an affair, a thousand rods or more in length, and with no breadth to speak of.

After having traversed about one-half the length of the island Fenwick found himself before a small, rude hut built of slabs, with a single small window and a door which stood ajar.

"Here's your quarters, my young pilgrim," said the one who had acted as spokesman for both.

Fenwick had been recovering his strength and self-possession a great deal faster than he had given evidence of.

He abruptly faced about to demand:

"Well, who says I have got to go in?"



"No one has said it yet. But you might as well make your mind up to it, for that's what it has got to come to."

"Who are you, anyway? What are the names of the thugs into whose hands I have fallen? Are you some of the Sanford crowd, or did they have to import you from another part of the country? What does Theron Crane pay you for this, anyway?"

The man who had acted as spokesman so far was a large, burly fellow, with sandy hair and whiskers and round shoulders; he looked powerful and vicious enough to be a professional assassin.

"You needn't be cranky, youngster, for we aren't sensitive, and what you say don't hurt. Just step inside the shanty and we'll guarantee that you'll come out all right in the end."

"I suppose it would have been all right in the end if you had chucked me under the water and kept me there," Fenwick retorted.

"Not unless you had lived a pretty moral life, young man. And according to the stories about you you wouldn't care to be taken out of the world in too much of a hurry; but we won't talk. It's business with us now, and quick business, too!"

Fenwick's brain was acutely acting. Without turning his head he glanced from the right to left, and the resolution to escape rose within him to a point which he could not resist.

"You're two against one, and in the point of weight and advantage you're ahead of me besides," he said, and his tone sounded more submissive. "So I suppose I'll have to give in until my turn comes, but you'll find you'll have to keep me caged a good while before you get me tamed."

He stepped toward the cabin as he said this, then veered suddenly to one side, made a tiger-like spring past the big, burly fellow, on past the corner of the cabin and into the dense shrubbery beyond.

So small was the island that a few swift bounds brought Fenwick back to the place where the boat had been left.

The craft had been fastened to a tree by a rope. Fenwick had noticed this when he got out of it, so he had his knife in his hand and a single stroke severed the rope, and another leap took him into the boat.

The momentum of the spring sent the craft away from the shore, and a moment after he dipped the oars into the stream and was pulling away from the tiny island and his would-be captors with all the strength there was in his arms.

## CHAPTER X.

### SEEN AND OVERHEARD.

The shores of the stream were wooded, and in the darkness looked gloomy enough. There were no landmarks with which the young schoolmaster was familiar.

As he rowed down past the island he heard a shout, and could dimly see his captors standing close to the shore, waving their arms frantically.

He glanced back once more to see if his enemies were still in sight.

As he did so he saw a bright, instantaneous flash from the shore of the island, and a second after heard the report of a revolver.

This was an experience for which Fenwick was not prepared. While he heard neither sound or other effect of the bullet, and therefore judged that it must have sped wide of its mark, the feeling that a shot had been fired at him was anything but a comfortable one.

But the attempt was not repeated. A moment after the shores of the island became indistinct and the boat was rounding one of the broad, graceful bends of the river.

By this time the shape of the boat and its occupant must have been lost to the sight of the men on the island as they were merged in the black surface of the stream and in the blacker forest outlines beyond.

Fenwick had not yet stopped to think what he had done. That he had outwitted two burly fellows, who certainly had every advantage in the beginning, was a fact that he thought nothing about. His heart was beating rather fast, partly from excitement and partly from his exertions. But he kept at his work until at last, with a feeling of keen satisfaction, he recognized several familiar points along the shore of the river.

A moment after he was sending the craft across the current, and when he leaped ashore it was at the landing nearest the schoolhouse.

The school building itself was not visible from this point. But there was a path leading from the river directly to the strip of highway which passed the school. The landing itself was on the Sanford instead of the Parksburg side of the line.

Fenwick secured the craft; not so much because he was particular about its safety, as because it occurred to him that it might be of use in identifying the ruffians with whom he had had such an exciting encounter.

In another moment he was moving swiftly up the path. But he did not go far before he was again brought to a halt. And this time it was by the sound of a heavy, measured tread passing as it seemed directly across the path which he was following.

He had barely time to recoil and shelter himself in a thicket before he saw a tall form cross the path, and another moment a voice exclaimed:

"Is the coast clear?"

"The coast is clear," came back with a military precision of tones.

"There ain't much use in our pacing this side, anyhow, Tom," said the first speaker, a minute later.

"That's the way it seems to me. There wouldn't any of the Parksburg fellows come up from this side of the river, because there ain't many of them smart enough to think of doing it. And another thing, they couldn't get wind of the affair in time to call a crowd together before we get the thing along so far that they can't help themselves."

"How are they getting along?"

"Swimmingly, I guess."

"Have they got it onto rollers yet?"

"No, they haven't got as far as that yet. Flanders, you know, is bound to boss the whole thing, and what he knows wouldn't make much of a book. They got two or three jackscrews under one side of the concern, and he set 'em to work raising the building on that side, and then run off and tended to something else, without seeing that the fellows on the other side went to work, too. So the first thing they knew the schoolhouse was tipped up sideways and the timbers were creaking and cracking in a way which made it look as if the whole concern were going to pieces."

Fenwick slipped away from the path, and, making a short detour, crossed the beat of the sentinel who had spoken, and soon found himself within the line of the enemy.

As he reached the clearing he saw that the space was lighted by several bonfires, making the place almost as light as day. And beyond stood the building itself, raised upon jackscrews, still somewhat tilted from the clumsy workmanship, while forty men and boys moved hurriedly about, their figures looking strange and unreal in the flickering light of the bonfires.

Fenwick remembered at this minute that his bicycle was in the small shed adjoining the school building. As yet this building



was entirely unmolested, and a single glance showed Fenwick that it stood in a shadow, and that this same shadow lay black and quivering along nearly the entire space intervening between the woods and the schoolhouse.

Springing out from among the trees, and keeping well within the shadows, he walked boldly and unconcernedly toward the small shed.

That he was seen by more than one of those who were flitting about in the vicinity of the building there could be no doubt; yet none gave him so much as a second glance, since he was supposed to be a member of their party, there being nothing suspicious in his movements.

Reaching the shed, which was secured by a padlock of which he held the key, he unlocked the door, and in another moment he ran out his trusted bicycle.

Since he could not ride through the woods there was nothing for him to do but to strike boldly out into the road and pump the pedals for all he was worth.

Without a second's hesitation this was what he did. He had the length of the shadows in which to work up speed, and when he came out into the light he was moving with accelerated swiftness.

Those who saw him simply stared after him, too bewildered by his sudden appearance among them to do anything else. Then a shout was raised, and he heard his name repeated by several pairs of lips.

The road was level and fairly good, although there was plenty of sand farther on.

In a moment half a dozen fellows scattered about the road and started in pursuit of Fenwick. Some of them were in positions which seemed to promise at least a chance of cutting him off in his flight.

But the fact that he was a good wheelman was in his favor.

Within three minutes after going from the sight of his pursuers Fenwick sprang from his wheel in front of the Weyman dwelling.

He was not greatly surprised to see a light shining from the sitting-room windows, for he inferred that there might have been some uneasiness on the part of the family at his non-appearance. But as he knocked he was greatly surprised to find the door opened by Miss Edna.

Fenwick could not help giving the girl an admiring glance, for she was certainly very pretty in the light wrapper which she wore, and with the light from the lamp which she carried shining upon her face.

"Oh, you have come, Mr. Fenwick!" she exclaimed, a note of delight in her voice.

"Better late than never, I hope," he answered.

"Oh, yes, but we wondered that you should go away from the schoolhouse and not come back here at all. What has happened?"

"It's quite a long story and I mustn't stop to tell it now. You see I'm a good deal more anxious that you should answer my questions than I am to satisfy your curiosity. But how does it happen that you are sitting up at this time of night? It must be midnight or later."

"It's nearly one o'clock," she answered. "But I supposed you knew what was keeping us all up."

"Not on my account, I hope?" Fenwick returned.

"Oh, no. It was on account of the fire."

"Fire! Where?"

"Up in the center of the town, where they're building the town hall."

"I knew nothing about it. Was the building on fire?"

"I expect so. But it's strange that we can't see the light from the house, for it isn't a great way, and the building stands at the top of a hill. We can almost see it in the daytime. It's right over yonder."

The girl came out upon the porch as she spoke and pointed up the road over the dark treetops in the direction of the Crockett dwelling.

There was certainly no signs of a fire either in that direction or in any other. Even as they were speaking they heard the rumble of wheels, and the next moment Mr. Weyman's buggy, loaded with Crocketts, drew up in front of the house.

There was a perfect chatter of voices as the boys sprang off the team, and the approach of other wheels were heard. A moment after several teams had drawn up along the roadside, each loaded with as many men and boys as it could carry.

The big hands of Andy Crockett fell upon Fenwick's shoulder. "We were sold in first-class shape," he exclaimed. "But how was it we didn't see you there?"

"Because I wasn't there to be seen," returned Fenwick.

"We supposed you would be drawn up there by the same hoax as we were. How the story came to get afloat is more than we can get at. It was a good giveaway for us, anyhow!"

"Not so big as it will be if you don't show yourself over to the schoolhouse about as quick as you can."

"How is that?"

"The hoax was bigger than you dreamed of. If you were decoyed up into the middle of the town by a false alarm it is easy to guess where the story started and why the trick was played."

"A Sanford trick! I suspected as much."

"A Sanford trick!" repeated the elder Crockett, who came fuming up at this moment. "And a small one, to say the least, and we'll manage to pay them for it."

"They seem to be taking their pay as they go along. They have got the schoolhouse on jackscrews and will have it on rollers inside of half an hour if you don't do something to stop the game!"

This announcement from the lips of Jud Fenwick, coolly and distinctly spoken, was taken up and repeated by all who heard it. The result was magical. Those who alighted from their teams sprang back into them again. There was a perfect scramble to get aboard the wagons and buggies.

Fenwick did not bother the teams, but led all the rest upon his wheel. Within a fraction of a minute half a dozen teams loaded with men and boys—and each man and boy filled with belligerence toward the Sanford crowd—was rumbling along the road to the Still River schoolhouse.

It looked as if the final hour for the battle between the Parksburgers and Sanfordites had come!

## CHAPTER XI.

### TWO KINDS OF A PULL.

With all the clatter and noise of the wheels, Fenwick's silent steed got there first.

When he first came in sight of the schoolyard Fenwick saw that the Sanford fellows had been making the most of the time that had elapsed since he had left them.

The fact that they were in a fair way of betrayal, and with all the possibilities of an interruption, had accelerated their efforts to a remarkable degree.

The schoolhouse now stood, to so express it, squarely upon its pins, and the rollers were being put underneath it.

Timbers had been laid for a track, a yoke of oxen had been backed up preparatory to hitching to the building, and it looked



as if the Still River schoolhouse would soon be established on Sanford soil without any question of boundaries.

Fenwick saw so much and paused to observe no more.

Wheeling about without dismounting, he rode back to meet the foremost team which was following him, and which chanced to be the one loaded with Crocketts.

"Have you any tackle or rope handy that you could hitch onto that building?" he briskly asked.

"Tackle to hitch onto that building!" Crockett repeated.

"Yes—so that you could draw it over to the Parksburg side of the line? If you could only get it a few rods this way, then you would most certainly have a legal right to keep the Sanford fellows from touching it."

"That's so! Tackle? But we haven't got it with us. There's chains and ropes and pulleys enough up in my barn to draw the whole town of Sanford down here—selectmen, committeemen and all."

The elder Crockett, upon uttering these words, started off like a bullet out of a gun, sprang into his buggy, made a recklessly short turn in the road, and set his horse at a gallop back toward the Crockett dwelling, regardless of the danger of a collision with the other teams which were drawing up in line along the side of the narrow road.

By this time all the teams had come up and the occupants had alighted.

The road was full of men and boys, and as the elder Crockett sped back homeward the younger Crocketts gathered about Fenwick to learn what was in the wind.

"It seems to be the only thing to do," said Fenwick, in his usual cool way as Andy asked him what had set his father off in such a crazy rush homeward. "The Sanford fellows have got the building nicely raised and onto rollers, and unless I'm mistaken it will pull as easy in one direction as in another. They have got it all ready, and it will now be merely a question of which can hitch the strongest team on."

"You are going to hitch a Parksburg team onto this side of the schoolhouse and try to draw it farther onto this side of the line?" Andy asked.

"That's the scheme."

"And if they try to fight us off?"

"Why, then they'll begin the fight. My idea was that we didn't want to pitch into them as long as they kept their side of the line. It ought to be a battle of strategy rather than one of clubs or stones, and certainly we don't want any guns in it."

Fenwick's suggestion was taken up and repeated until there was not a man or boy in the crowd who did not understand what had been proposed.

It was hard to restrain their enthusiasm both for Fenwick and for his scheme.

The novelty of it—the idea of the Sanford people being put to the trouble of raising the building ready for removal, and then for the Parksburg people to step in and hitch on a stronger team than the Sanford crowd could get together and make a pulling match of it, involved a sort of contest which promised to provide plenty of sport as well as excitement.

On the whole the affair, which had begun in a quarrel between the two towns, which was serious enough in itself, was now approaching a point where a very narrow line separated the tragedy from the comedy.

As soon as he could get them quieted down sufficiently to listen, Fenwick made another proposition. This was that a messenger should be sent to the central portion of the town to get together a larger crowd of men and all the tackle that might be needed for their enterprise.

Mr. Weyman had the fastest team in the lot, and started out alone on his mission.

He had been gone about ten minutes before Mr. Crockett appeared upon the scene with an express wagon loaded with ropes, chains and pulleys. They paused only for a brief consultation, and then drew boldly into full view of the Sanford people, who were still clumsily engaged in their preparations.

The Sanford people had barely hitched the team onto the building, but as the rollers were not fairly adjusted they were by no means ready to start.

Out beside the schoolhouse lay several timbers which it had been intended to use for the laying of the track upon which to move the building. Only a part of these timbers had been used, and the first move of the Parksburg boys was to seize upon the timbers and drag them out to the position desired for their own use.

As the Parksburgers appeared the Sanford crowd ceased operations, and for a brief space stared at them with bewilderment and dismay.

The Sanford people had oxen for a team. As these animals always move at a very slow and steady pace, it was probably safe enough for them to hitch the team directly to the building, since there would be no danger of their running the house off the rollers by any sudden start or jerk.

But in cases where horses are used, even in moving the smallest building, a special machine must be prepared, which is operated by a crank which the horse pulls round and round in a circle, and so winds the rope which is attached to the building on the pulley, giving a slow and steady movement, as well as getting more power out of one horse.

It was therefore agreed that it would be decidedly reckless to hitch a pair, or even one horse, to the building to pull against the oxen attached to the other side. The horses would be sure to get excited and pull by jerks, with results which may be imagined.

Mr. Crockett, with the others members of his party, was busy arranging the tackle while the boys were placing the timbers. At the present rate of action they would soon be ready to hitch the team to the building and show the Sanford crowd what Parksburg could do in the way of pulling.

The Sanford team was already hitched to the building. The rollers were in place. The man superintending the work had been buzzing about for several moments, as if he dreaded to give the final orders.

But at last the order was given and the teamster began to swing his whip and draw his lash gently across the back of the "nigh" ox.

From where Andy and Fenwick stood at the moment, they could observe what the Sanford crowd was doing better than they could see what was going on on the Parksburg side.

The oxen evidently knew their business, which is generally a very slow and steady sort of business, for at a word from their driver they were seen to strain at the yoke, their noses down to the ground, their eyes rolling with general signs of distress which they probably did not really feel.

At the same time there was a creak of the rollers and the schoolhouse actually moved.

"What can they be doing on the Parksburg side?" exclaimed Andy, with much excitement, for he felt that his side was allowing the Sanford people to gain an advantage which it would be difficult to recover.

As he spoke the top set in the Crockett flight sprang around the end of the schoolhouse, closely followed by Fenwick.

The creaking continued, and, to his surprise, as he placed



his hand on the corner of the schoolhouse he found that it was not moving then. A sort of tremor seemed to pass through the timbers, and that was all.

It was so dark on the Parksburg side, for there were few lanterns there to show what was being done, and the bonfires had gone out entirely, that all they could see for a minute was a mass of boys and men huddled together on the other side of the road, none of them being within twenty yards of the schoolhouse.

But as Andy sprang out into the road, eager to discover why all were so idle at the very moment when so much needed to be done, Fenwick suddenly saw his companion come to a halt, while his hat flew off and he staggered backward, measuring his length upon the ground.

Fenwick sprang to the assistance of his companion, wondering what had happened to him. But as he reached the same spot something struck his own hat and knocked it from his head!

His first thought was that something had been thrown at them. But as he stepped back, at the same time flinging up one hand, the hand came in contact with a stout rope, doubled, which was strung from the schoolhouse out across the road at about the height of his own head.

His hat had been knocked off by running against this, and it was the same obstacle which had thrown Andy Crockett to the ground.

Andy was by this time on his feet, and both at once understood the cause of their mishap.

"That's what dad was up to!" Andy exclaimed.

"And a good scheme it is, too. It will keep the building where it is, even if it doesn't move it any farther on our side of the line."

"It's all right if the rope only holds."

"It looks as if it was stout enough, and it's double. I guess it's more than one pair of oxen will want to pull apart."

In another moment Fenwick and Andy had joined the group of Parksburgers who were huddled together on the other side of the road.

"Well, does she move?" asked Mr. Crockett, as he came bustling up to them, rubbing his hands and grinning exultantly.

"Just as much as the rope will stretch," said Fenwick.

"Let them lash their oxen if they want to. It's good for 'em, and if they want to hitch on another pair of oxen let 'em do it. I guess they'll think it's the heaviest school building they ever tackled before they pull that big oak yonder up by the roots! That's what the schoolhouse is hitched to."

It did not take the Sanford crowd long, however, to find out why the schoolhouse did not "come over" in response to their coaxing.

As soon as the discovery was made a general rush was made toward the Parksburg side of the line, with the evident intention of capturing the cable with which the building was moored, and so end up the affair with a rush.

Fenwick was the first to perceive the movement, and he was the one to give the alarm. And the Crocketts and their allies were fully prepared. Every one of them made a general dash toward the spot where the line was supposed to divide the two towns, and there took their stand.

The men of the Sanford crowd held back. The boys made a rush, and in a moment the air was full of sticks and stones, and, as the two crowds met, there was a perfect pandemonium of sounds, while fists and clubs were freely used.

## CHAPTER XII.

### TIFFANY TRICKED.

The brunt of the whole tussle fell upon the shoulders of the more youthful portion of the Sanford crowd.

They showed pluck enough, but it was a losing fight from the first. The day was breaking, and they well knew that it was too late to carry out their plans before another night.

To show that they recognized this fact, the teamster was already in the act of unhitching the oxen from the building, while the other men of the party were most evidently making ready for departure.

Within less time than it takes for me to narrate the encounter, the affair was all over. Parksburg was left in full possession of the field, and not a Sanford hat or cap was left in the clearing which surrounded the schoolhouse.

The building was still upon rollers, and no attempt to change its position was made then. Other ropes were attached on the Parksburg side in order to more firmly secure the building and keep it in its place, and the Parksburg crowd went triumphantly homeward by the dim light of the dawn.

One of the Crockett boys was left behind to act as sentinel. There was good reason to believe that there was another sentinel stationed on the other side among the trees.

The next day passed uneventfully, as far as the schoolhouse affair was concerned. The most important transaction of the day was that one which looked toward bringing to Parksburg some of the life and sport of the more populous towns and cities, but which that remote farming region had not yet enjoyed.

Fenwick had a friend who was employed in a large sporting-goods establishment in Boston. To him was sent an order for six bicycles.

As these were to be purchased all at one time and for club use, a special discount was assured.

Before Fenwick had gotten the order ready for the mail he held it up before his pupils and read its terms to them, that they might have that to encourage them while waiting for the wheels to arrive.

"You're doing all this for us, Mr. Fenwick," said Andy, as they walked homeward that night. "And yet you don't know that you'll be able to stay here another twenty-four hours."

"What of that?" Fenwick asked.

"Why, it looks as if you had an interest in us whether you get any benefit or not."

"So I have. I have engaged to teach this school to earn a little money. I need some pretty badly, and if I have any I have got to earn it in some way, and I have got enough laid out for the future to call for work of some kind. And if I am driven away from here I shall have to try some other place and some other way, that's all."

"I'm afraid you ought to go away while you have a chance. It strikes me that that Mr. Tiffany is going to spring a trap on you one of these days."

"Let him spring it, then. Perhaps I can get out of it, but if I can't I won't be the first one to get caught. Perhaps it is not Tiffany that is to be feared so much."

"Who else?"

"The one who had me trapped last night. I don't like that sort of trick very much."

"Who do you expect did it?"

"Oh, the job was done by the two ruffians with whom I found myself. Who they are nobody around here seems to know, though I have described them to quite a number; but I take it that they must have been hired by somebody else."



"Do you think it was Mr. Crane?"

"I don't know."

Fenwick spent a good part of the evening with Andy. When he got back to the Weyman dwelling Edna met him at the door.

A glance at her face showed him that there was something wrong. Indeed, she did not wait for him to knock, and it seemed as if she had been waiting there, listening for him to come.

Instead of standing aside and allowing him to enter, she stepped lightly out upon the step and closed the door behind her.

"Your Mr. Tiffany is here," were the first words she said, and her voice was full of suppressed excitement.

"He isn't my Mr. Tiffany. But what is the matter, Miss Edna?"

"He is here to see you. He did not come alone—Mr. Dudley, from Sanford Center, is here with him."

"And who is Mr. Dudley?"

"He is a constable—or a deputy sheriff—or something of the sort. They are waiting here for you," added Edna. "Mr. Tiffany has been telling stories all the evening and trying to make himself agreeable in every way. But yet I just hate that man!"

"Much obliged, Miss Edna, for helping me out so far. It's tough work to have to hate a man alone, and it's almost as good as having a friend stand by me to have somebody else hate him just for my sake."

Fenwick's voice shook as he said this, and he seemed to be trying to overcome the emotion which was almost too powerful for him.

"We mustn't let them hear us talking. I came out through all the other rooms to this door so that they wouldn't suspect anything. I can hear them laughing and talking in there now. Father's in there, and I guess they're trying to entertain him. Probably Mr. Tiffany is telling one of his funny stories."

Fenwick's lips were shut tight, and there was an undecided look upon his face. Then in a moment he suddenly exclaimed:

"I don't think I'll go with these people. Miss Edna—that is, if I can help myself."

"What do you mean?"

"I think I'll light out somewhere else."

"Go away from Still River? Run away from here to-night?"

"Something like that. But I won't stay long if I can help it. I am not going to be driven away if I can help it, nor am I going to be carried away if I can help that. But how did these people come? With teams, I suppose?"

"Yes, with a team."

"Where is it?"

"Hitched out by the barn. I can almost see it from here."

"Well then, Miss Edna, I'm going to do something which will be very bold, and which will look to you as something almost wicked."

"What is it?" she asked.

"I am going to borrow their team and escape with it. I'll see that it is taken good care of and returned to them, and I shan't go a great ways. But this Mr. Tiffany has been so sly and underhanded and unfair from the beginning that I am going to get the advantage over him every chance I get, and in every way I can think of. I have done nothing that deserves such treatment. But if I were to let them take me it would be sure to cause a good deal of trouble, and would probably break up my school here at Still River. If I could only have a little time I'd be all right. But he wouldn't give me a bit! So good-by for to-night, Miss Edna, and thank you for helping me! I will soon see you again."

Before she could utter a remonstrance Fenwick had darted out into the darkness toward the barn.

And standing there, listening and breathless, she presently heard the creak of Mr. Tiffany's wagon, and the next instant the team flashed past the house and out upon the road like a meteor!

Simultaneously the door was flung open and both Tiffany and Dudley rushed out. The last named ran out to where the team had been hitched, while the other laid one hand heavily on the arm of Edna Weyman.

"So you warned him, did you, Miss Edna? So you helped him to give us the slip?" Tiffany exclaimed, looking sharply down into the girl's face.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### MORE THAN ONE ROAD TO SANFORD.

As he unhitched the horse from the corner of the barn Fenwick's quick eyes told him that the horse was an uncommonly good one. And it occurred to him that neither Mr. Weyman or Mr. Crockett had horses which could match this one in a race if it should come to that.

His bicycle stood just within the barn, and the door was ajar. He pulled the wheel out, lifted it into the express wagon, then unhitched the horse, sprang onto the seat, and sped away as Edna Weyman had seen him do.

He drove straight toward the town of Sanford. An hour of rapid driving brought him to the village, and he drew up in front of the hotel where he knew that Mr. Tiffany made his stopping place.

A young fellow with a slouching gait, or more properly a staggering one, for it was different from the ordinary slouch, came out of the hotel stable as Fenwick drove up.

"Well, Moles, so I find you here," Fenwick exclaimed, as he leaned over to speak to the youth.

"What!—the young schoolmaster—and 'way over here," Moles retorted with his thick, hesitating speech, which was so much like that of a man who was intoxicated.

"Yes, 'way up here!—right in the midst of the enemy's camp, as it were! But where's your master?"

"Gone down to see you, I suppose. But that team—great gosh!"

"What's the matter with the team, Moles?"

"It's Mr. Dudley's team! He's the Sanford constable, and he's gone down to see you!"

"That's queer. Must be we missed connections somewhere, for I'm here and they aren't. But what did they want to see me for?"

"Oh, I dunno. Some of Mr. Tiffany's business, and he don't tell folks what he does things for. He's one of the fellers that asks no questions and tells no tales."

"Did he start with Mr. Dudley from here the first of the evening?"

"Yes."

"Did they tell you they were coming down to see me?"

"They didn't tell me. I just heerd them talkin' about it."

"What did you hear them say?"

"Oh, quite a lot. But I wasn't listenin' in particular, and I couldn't understand most of the details. I guess they was goin' to arrest you for something."

"You didn't hear what for?"

"No, I didn't hear that. But I don't see how in blazes you got hold of that team."

"Oh, that was easy enough. I just walked out, got into it, took up the reins and drove off. But don't let it worry you, Moles. Mr. Tiffany will tell you when he sees you that I got



hold of it all straight enough, and easy, too. Now, Moles, I want you to do me a little favor."

"What kind of a favor?"

"Oh, something real easy. And I'm going to offer you something for it. I suppose Mr. Tiffany pays you something?"

"Nothin' very big. He has heaps and gobs of money in his pocket, but he's mighty stingy of it when it comes to givin' much of it to me. He's hinted several times that he was goin' to do somethin' handsome by me if I was only faithful to him."

"And you have been faithful for some time?"

"For three days."

"And the something handsome hasn't showed up yet?"

"No, it ain't showed up yet. I suppose he thinks it's handsome for him to treat me to soda water here at the hotel once in a while; but he pays good board here, and they'll throw in whatever he drinks or treats me on."

"Do you suppose Mr. Tiffany ever takes anything that has anything stronger than whiz in it?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Why, soda water, as you call it, is mostly whiz, but there are some other kinds of drinks that don't make much noise before they are drunk, but measure up pretty well after they're down."

"Oh, you mean liquor. Maybe he takes a glass now and then on chilly mornings."

"Well, what do you say about doing the favor for me?"

"It depends on what it is."

"I just want you to take this team over to the the next town—I suppose that's about ten miles—leave the team there and come back on the stage."

"Good land! What do you want me to do that for?"

"For two dollars in cash," said Fenwick, taking the money from his pocket—a crisp two-dollar bill, which he held temptingly before Moles' eyes.

Moles had seen plenty of money in his day, but to finger any that was absolutely his own would be a decided novelty to him.

"Talk fast! Will you do it or not?"

"I declare I dunno," faltered Moles.

"All right, then. If you don't know, that means you won't do it. I've got to find somebody that does know. Any other young loafers around here?"

Fenwick sprang from the vehicle and looked into the barn, where a livery stable was run in connection with the hotel.

It was not too late for several loungers to be hanging around the stable—loafing, smoking, telling stories and "talking horse." He caught sight of one whom he thought might answer his purpose.

He stepped to the door and motioned the fellow to come out. The young man complied, staring curiously at the young school-master all the while.

"Do you want an hour's job?—no, we'll call it three hours, so that you'll have plenty of time?" Fenwick asked.

"What doin'?" the other asked.

Fenwick briefly told him what was wanted, putting the proposition almost identically as he had put it to Moles. The latter had withdrawn to a little distance, looking first at Fenwick, then at the team, and then at the loafer, his slow wits unable to take in the whole of the strange transaction at once.

His wits were just quick enough to realize that he had lost a chance to earn a two-dollar bill, and he was beginning to feel regret that he had been so quick to refuse the offer. For here was a case where the cash was in sight, and that was a good deal better than the "something handsome" which Mr. Tiffany was always promising.

"Wall, I dunno," said the loafer, after Fenwick had briefly stated his proposition.

"So here's another one that doesn't know. I don't want to hire a man that doesn't know after I have offered him a fair trade. Who are those fellows in there? Are any of them likely to know whether they want to earn two dollars in cash, and earn it easy?"

"Oh, I'd like the two dollars well enough," said the loafer.

"Well, earn it and you have it—better than that, you have it before you earn it if you'll only give me your word of honor and start off and not let any grass grow under that horse's feet. Let me tell you that it's a good horse, too, and as pretty a driver as you'll pull the reins over for many a day."

The young stranger eyed Fenwick sharply, then eyed the horse, and then Moles.

"I'll do it," said the latter, shambling up at that moment.

"All right, then; jump in and here's your money," said Fenwick.

As he spoke he thrust the two-dollar bill into Moles' hand, gave him a gentle push toward the team, and with greater celerity than the slow-witted fellow had ever moved before, he climbed into the vehicle, seized the reins and was ready to start.

"Now drive fast and remember my instructions to the letter. And don't let any grass grow under the horse's feet."

The team was turned into the road again, and in another moment was speeding away at a lively gait.

"Say!" exclaimed the young fellow, seizing Fenwick by the arm, "I was goin' to do it! Why didn't you wait a minute? I was goin' to do it for you."

"You said you didn't know, and I didn't want anybody that didn't know. Moles didn't know in the first place, but he found out, and so he was ahead of you. Nobody that's doing business with me wants to say they don't know when they're asked if they want to earn any money. They lose the chance, that's all. But there is something you can do for me, and I'll pay you for it, although I can't do as well as I could have done if you had done the other work."

"What is it?"

"You can just forget that you saw me here to-night; forget that you saw Moles go off with that team, and everything else. Of course they'll find out the truth, and they will be sure to know that the team was here, and that Moles went off in it. But I don't think they'll find out so easy that I got out of it—they'll think that Moles drove me off, and that I had him do it to bring the team back for me. If they should happen to get that into their heads you won't take the trouble to correct them, will you?"

"No, of course not. I ain't no great hand to tattle, nohow."

"All right, then, see that you don't. Here's a small fee, showing that I'm willing to pay for a favor when I get one. Money don't come easy to me, but it's got to go pretty easy to-night. Now see me whiz—but just forget that you saw me, that's all."

Fenwick had taken the bicycle from the wagon the moment he had alighted. He now easily flung himself upon it, and was speeding away down the slope in the direction of the Still River schoolhouse.

In his flight from Mr. Tiffany Fenwick had taken another road than that which led past the schoolhouse.

He did this purposely, perfectly sure that he would be followed by the same route. But, mounted on his silent steed, he drew up in front of the Weyman dwelling at almost precisely the same moment that Mr. Tiffany and the Sanford constable arrived at Sanford Center by the other route!



## CHAPTER XIV.

## MR. CRANE INSIDE THE WORKS.

Fenwick had managed his ruse with consummate skill.

He had given Edna Weyman to understand that he would return that night. She had promised to admit him if he came, and so thoroughly excited was she that there was no danger of her falling asleep while she was waiting for his return.

Therefore he did not have to knock very loudly on the door of the farmhouse, a little more than two hours after he had left it. Miss Edna admitted him.

"You see I'm back and ready to get a little sleep before I begin school at the usual hour in the morning," said Fenwick, with a faint smile, as the shining eyes of the girl looked into his.

"They took one of father's teams and followed you," were her first words.

"Did they say anything to you?"

"Mr. Tiffany accused me of helping you to escape."

"Well, you owned up to it, didn't you?"

"I told him that I helped you."

"And what did he say to that?"

"Oh, he said something in that slick way of his about my being a very natural sort of girl, and that he shouldn't make me very much trouble on account of it. He said he thought he should see you before morning."

"And how about your father? Does he think that I am a sort of young reprobate? Is he afraid to harbor me in his house longer?"

"No, I don't think he feels that way. Indeed, Mr. Tiffany didn't say anything against you—in fact, he didn't say much about you, anyway, except that he had got to see you, and that there was a little matter that would have to be settled in some way. He asked my father to let him take the team and follow you."

"Does your father know you helped me to escape?"

"I told him of it."

"Did he blame you?"

"He laughed a little, and didn't say anything when I told him."

"Then I guess it's all right in that quarter. Now, if you don't mind, I think I'll turn in and get a little sleep. You know I am engaged to teach school in the Still River district, and I want to earn my salary. I have not been used to such late hours as I have been keeping to-night and last night."

Fenwick retired to his bed, but his brain was so active under the excitement of the night before that it was some time before he could sleep. Consequently, it was late in the morning when he awoke, and he found Andy Crockett at the door waiting for him.

"Any school to-day?" asked the youth, with a grin upon his homely features.

"I'd like to get onto the outside of some rations, and then you'll find me on hand ready for business," was Fenwick's reply.

"As long as the building is hitched to a tree we know just where to find it. But I just come from there, and it looks as if some of the Sanford fellows had stolen another march on us."

"I thought there was somebody appointed to look after that to prevent their doing such mischief."

"It hasn't been neglected very long. One of my brothers has been over there ever since school closed last night, about once in two or three hours. We thought that was often enough to prevent them from tackling onto the building and moving it, and that was all we were on the lookout for."

"Well, what's happened now?"

"Somebody inside. I see four Sanford fellows going in just as

I came away, and I could hear voices within just as plain as I can hear yours now. There was one voice that——"

Andy hesitated, and looked sharply at Fenwick, while Fenwick looked sharply back.

"You mean Mr. Theron Crane?"

"It sounded like his music, though I wouldn't be sure."

Fenwick did not hurry particularly with his breakfast, for he could think and scheme as well while eating, so no time was lost. When he came out at last, he did not look at all hopeless or discouraged.

"I think we can get possession of that building if we only work it right. Will some of you fellows bring along a ladder? There's one lying out there by the shed, and I think Mr. Weyman will let us borrow it, even if we don't ask for it."

The ladder was seized by half a dozen boys at the same time, and all started off down the road at their top speed.

Fenwick followed more leisurely, and when he came in sight of the building he felt convinced that what he had suspected was true.

Theron Crane had gotten the Sanford pupils together and promised to provide instruction for them in the Still River schoolhouse that day. And at that very moment school was in session, with Mr. Theron Crane at the head of this institution of learning, which was mounted on stilts.

"If some of you boys wouldn't mind carrying the ladder round and resting it against the back side of the building, I'll do the rest," said Fenwick. "But take care and don't make any more noise than you can help, and attract no more attention than possible, for there is no window on that side, and they can't see what we're doing."

Fenwick's suggestion was carried out.

The boys then saw him enter the little shed to which allusion has already been made, and come out with a bundle of hay thrust compactly under one arm, and also with a piece of board about fifteen inches in width.

As soon as the ladder was placed in position Fenwick mounted it, and, stepping as lightly as possible, so as to attract no attention inside that could be avoided, he ascended to the roof.

Fenwick's first move was to divide the bundle of hay into several small parcels, and two of these he dropped down into the chimney. Then he took a bunch of matches from his pocket, ignited the whole of them, and, as soon as they got fairly to burning, he dropped those down also. This he followed up by the rest of the hay, and then he took a small paper parcel from his pocket and dropped that down the chimney mouth, from which already quite a dense mass of smoke was pouring.

He then waited a few minutes, until he could tell by the color of the smoke that all he had thrown down had become ignited. Then he took the square piece of board and placed it over the top of the chimney, leaning carelessly forward upon it, so as to keep it in place.

One or two of the windows of the schoolhouse were opened a little way, for the morning was quite cool, and Mr. Theron Crane had, therefore, paid less attention than he otherwise would to the matter of ventilation.

But at this moment a window went up, and to those listening and watching outside came the sound of sneezing and coughing in all the different tones and styles in which eighteen or twenty strong-lunged young fellows may cough and sneeze.

In the midst of the coughing and sneezing, the shaggy head and classic features of Mr. Theron Crane presented themselves at the window—were even thrust out—as if he was panting for something fit to breathe.

The coughing and sneezing continued to increase every instant,



and presently the heads began to leave the windows, and one and then another inmate rushed forth from the doorway, with streaming eyes and handkerchiefs to their faces, while the coughing and sneezing had become something terrible to hear and behold.

As a result of the first break, within less time than it takes to state the fact, Mr. Crane and every one of his pupils had sought the open air, and, to judge from their appearance, they had done so none too soon to save themselves from suffocation.

Even to the place where the Parksburg boys were standing there came a faint whiff from the inside of the building which showed them what the inmates must have had to endure.

Andy Crockett stood a little apart and raised one hand to Fenwick as a signal that his plan had succeeded. At the same time Fenwick removed the board from the chimney, and the next moment had descended to the ground.

No sooner had his feet touched *terra firma* than Andy Crockett, at the head of the Crockett flight, followed by fully a dozen stalwart fellows from the Parksburg side of the line, made a dash toward the discomfited Sanfordites, uttering a yell that would have done credit to double their number of Comanche Indians.

The Sanford boys did not attempt to stand their ground; they had been nearly suffocated by the fumes which they had inhaled, and were in poor trim to show their valor in another open tussel with their enemies.

"Skin, boys! Let them go into the schoolhouse and toast their young master, if they're so anxious to do it."

In a moment every one of them was using his legs for all he was worth, and even Mr. Crane unbent his dignity somewhat as he ambled away from the scene of his defeat.

Indeed, he had caught a glimpse of Fenwick, as the latter was descending from the roof of the building, and the glimpse was enough to tell him that he owed his defeat to the young master whom he so thoroughly hated.

Gladly would he then have stopped and attempted to retaliate if there had been any hope of success in his doing so.

But it was plain to him that his rival's chances were, for a time at least, in the ascendancy, and Mr. Theron Crane must bide his time for a final triumph.

Fenwick took his stand at the door of the schoolhouse, and called the boys about him, that the enemy might have no chance to gain an entrance.

As most of the windows of the building were open, and there was now a free draught to the chimney, so that no more smoke could come down into the room, a few minutes would suffice to clear away the fumes and make it possible for them to take possession.

"You have smoked them out," said Andy, in his big voice.

"I guess it would have smoked out most anybody that happened to be in there."

"Was there anything besides the hay?" Andy asked.

"A little parcel of sulphur, that's all. It will be a good thing for the health of all hands, for it is well enough to fumigate an old building once in a while to cleanse out the disease germs."

"There was one old disease germ that sails around under the name of Theron Crane, who ambled off about as soon as the smudge began to get in its work," grinned Andy.

"And in getting rid of him we have got rid of something as bad as pestilence—if he doesn't return. But I guess we can go inside now, and we'll find the atmosphere more wholesome than it was the last time we were here. It lacks but ten minutes to nine, so we'll begin school on time."

And so, indeed, did Jud Fenwick once more open school punctually in the Still River district, even though at first it looked as if the battle must go against him.

Fenwick had not intended that the affair of the night before should become a matter of gossip among his pupils. If the truth were to come out at all, it would come out soon enough in any case. He was afraid that there might be some among them who would feel some suspicion against him if they knew that two officers were really on the lookout for him.

Just before the close of school on this eventful day a team was heard to drive up to the door, and one of the occupants coolly entered the building.

Fenwick turned just in time to see Mr. Tiffany standing in the entryway. The man's face wore an exultant smile, and he was advancing with a confident swagger toward the inner door.

Fenwick quickly and quietly stepped to the entrance, with his hand upon it, and met Mr. Tiffany with a smile as confident and exultant as his own, and at the same time closed the door with a bang that shook the building! Instantly the one outside was heard to spring against that door, and for a moment the young schoolmaster stood with his shoulder pressed against it, his face red, his breath coming hard and fast, while he strove with his fingers to push the heavy iron bolt into the socket on the inner side!

## CHAPTER XV.

### FENWICK'S FLIGHT.

For just about sixty seconds the struggle between Jud Fenwick and Mr. Tiffany, one striving to close, the other to open, the door, continued with unabated vim.

There was a key in the lock, or had been, but in the struggle it had dropped out, and lay upon the floor just beyond Fenwick's reach.

Glancing hastily backward, he saw Andy Crockett and two other members of the Crockett flight coming toward him. There were several other boys who were upon their feet, and the girls were watching the struggle with an intentness which showed the keenness of their anxiety.

"The key, Andy!" Fenwick exclaimed.

Andy understood. At the same time the voice of Mr. Tiffany sounded on the other side:

"Here, Dudley! Give me a lift, can't you?"

Fenwick's face was almost purple, so violent were his exertions to keep the door closed. He was exercising every ounce of strength at his command, and the fact that he was holding his own with the detective, who was a wiry man, showed that the young schoolmaster was an antagonist not to be despised.

Push, pull, jerk—the door now opening an inch or so, then closing with a bang, then opening again, the effort so fully engaging all of Fenwick's energies that he had not an ounce of strength or a particle of breath to spare for anything else.

Andy saw the key, seized it, and sprang to Fenwick's assistance.

He could do little to help, as far as holding the door closed was concerned, for there was room for only one to cling to it.

Fenwick was becoming exhausted with his efforts, and at the same time could hear the heavy clump, clump of Constable Dudley's boots along the entryway.

"Take hold—relieve me—and I'll put in the key!" whispered Fenwick.

He purposely spoke in a tone low enough to be inaudible to those outside.

In a moment Andy had thrust the key into the lock, and, lending all the aid in his power, the door was momentarily closed and the key turned.

As the bolt clicked in the socket, an exclamation came from



the other side which so nearly resembled an oath that both Fenwick and Andy received a less favorable impression of Mr. Tiffany's morality than they had heretofore entertained.

"He's locked it, Dudley!" they heard Tiffany exclaim.

"Then we'll batter it down!" Dudley returned.

"Hold on a bit. There are windows to this building, and four sides to it, while there are only two of us. You stay here and watch the door, and I'll skip around to the other side, to see that the fellow doesn't give us the slip in that direction."

At the same moment that Mr. Tiffany was "skipping around" to the other side of the building, Jud Fenwick was reaching the same point by the shorter line of the building's diameter rather than its circumference.

The windows were very high, and he was obliged to spring upon one of the desks to reach them. Owing to the coolness of the day, only two of the windows were open. And neither of these was upon that side of the building from which Fenwick intended to make his escape. He was, therefore, hindered for a brief instant by the necessity of raising the sash. The latter stuck, and for a moment it looked as if Fenwick would not be able to get it open in time.

At last the window went up with a jerk. At the same time Fenwick heard the hurried tramp of feet outside, and knew that Mr. Tiffany was close at hand. For the space of a single, quick breath he hesitated, in doubt as to whether or not he should attempt to escape from that window.

"It might as well be here and now as anywhere and any time," he muttered.

As these words passed his lips, his lithe form shot out through the window, and he struck squarely upon all fours below.

Springing to his feet, he darted around the corner of the building just in time to elude the glance of Mr. Tiffany.

Counting upon the latter pausing for an instant to see whether the fugitive had emerged from the building or not, Fenwick struck out at his best pace straight across the road and toward a belt of woods on the other side.

He had just reached the edge of the latter, when he heard a shout behind him, and knew that he was seen by his pursuer.

The shout of Tiffany was not merely an exclamation, but a definable command, enunciating the name of Constable Dudley.

It was at this instant that Fenwick reached the woods, and a second after he knew that he was out of sight of his pursuer.

A pistol shot broke the stillness, and a ringing command from Mr. Tiffany's lips rang out:

"Stop, Fenwick, on your life! I mean business this time!"

"Let him pop!" exclaimed Fenwick, under his breath, without in the least slackening his pace. "He has no more right to shoot me than I have to shoot him. He's playing the bully and the blackguard, while he started out with the pretense of being a gentleman. He has played the part of a spy, and is crowding me just because he thinks I'm nothing but a boy, and can't help myself. He may use his pistol, and I'll use my legs, and, if he tries to crowd me too hard, he'll find that I can use something besides my legs!"

Mr. Tiffany did not fire a second shot.

The strip of timber was narrow, and Fenwick soon reached the other side of it.

He was upon the other side of the hill, and, therefore, out of sight by the time they had passed the timber growth. At the foot of the slope there was a stone wall, and on the other side of the wall was an extensive cornfield.

An early frost had blighted the tops and leaves of the corn, which, however, was dying a natural death, and leaving its fruitage behind.

The field itself belonged to Mr. Crockett. For a New England cornfield, it was a large one, comprising several acres in extent.

"I don't believe I can find a better place to play hide and seek with Tiffany and that duck-legged constable than right here," said Fenwick, after he had penetrated the field to the distance of several rods.

Fenwick kept straight on across the newly plowed field, taking no pains to conceal his tracks.

At length he reached the end of the field, and beyond found another forest track, which had the appearance of being more extensive in area than that through which he had already passed.

He struck into this also, still taking pains rather to leave distinct tracks than to conceal them.

He penetrated the woods for a distance of a quarter of a mile, and then abruptly changed his tactics.

Removing his shoes and stockings, and tying them in a compact bundle, he struck out upon a circular course, which soon brought him round facing the cornfield, to which he soon returned.

Stepping lightly, he left no trail which any eyes short of those of an Indian scout could detect. And the tracks that he left in the cultivated soil of the cornfield, looking like those of any other barefooted youth, were not likely to be identified, even if they were discovered.

Penetrating the corn for the distance of a few hundred yards, he proceeded to pull down a quantity of it, and then seated himself upon the dry, soft heap to rest.

He looked up at the sky, which was becoming rapidly dark. A storm was coming up, and several raindrops fell softly upon his face.

He pulled out his watch, and, striking a match, looked at the time. It lacked a quarter to seven o'clock. The autumn day had closed earlier than usual, and the darkness of night seemed fairly to have settled upon the scene.

"There will be somebody at the station, if I can only get there before the train arrives. I can send a telegram, and it will be possible to have a reply in good season to-morrow. It's the only thing to do, and I'll do it, if the station-master only knows enough to send and receive a message straight. Yes—that's what I'll do!"

Fenwick did not put on his shoes and stockings until he was again clear of the cornfield, for the soft earth there took impressions with too much distinctness, and there was a possibility that a pursuer might still be prowling about in the vicinity, watching for him to leave the shelter of the corn.

He had the best of reasons to believe, however, that Tiffany and Dudley, after following him across the field and into the woods beyond, had given up the chase till morning.

What measures they would then take was uncertain. All depended upon Tiffany's estimation of the urgency of the case.

Tiffany would probably expect Fenwick to attempt flight entirely from that locality, since pursuit had become such a serious matter.

Fenwick soon found his way back to the road, and, with his feet clad in their usual manner, he struck out down the slope in the direction of the railroad station.

The course to the station took him past the Weyman dwelling. At that point he purposely made a short detour, that he might not encounter any member of the family.

Yet, as he returned to the road a short distance below the Weyman farm buildings, and was leaping over a wall, he found himself fairly face to face with Edna Weyman.

"Why, Mr. Fenwick!" she exclaimed.



"You are not just coming from the schoolhouse. Edna?" he asked.

"No; I came home soon after you went. I just went down to the house of a neighbor to inquire whether they had caught you or not. Nearly all the boys in the district are out waiting to hear whether they overtook you. Every boy and girl at Still River hopes that you will escape, for they don't believe that you are really to blame for anything. But still, my father says—"

The girl interrupted herself, and Fenwick asked:

"What does your father say?"

"That, if you are really innocent of everything, the best thing you can do is to give yourself up to Mr. Tiffany, and have your innocence proven."

"Which shows that your father is giving judgment on something that he knows nothing about," said Fenwick, speaking almost sharply.

"That's what I told my father. But he told me that I must be careful, and not be too sure that you were honest and all right just because you happened to have a faculty for making yourself so popular among the pupils in your school. He said he couldn't help liking you himself, but that sometimes people had the faculty of making friends when they were not worthy of them."

"I can forgive your father for the advice he gave you. It would probably be best for you to heed it. You don't really know anything about me—you don't really know but I'm a noted burglar or highwayman, or some other criminal, in disguise. Maybe I don't look just like one, but you know appearances are oftentimes deceitful, and you had better take your father's advice and be on the safe side. But you have been so kind to me, and I appreciate it so much, that, if I have a chance to see you before I go away from Still River, I'll tell you the whole truth—I'll tell you why it is that that spying detective, Mr. Tiffany, and the duck-legged constable are chasing me through woods and over fields. But, till I see you again, and we have more time, good-by!"

He held out his hand impulsively, and the girl took it. Some kind of an incoherent reply fell from her lips.

Then he turned, and striking into a loping trot, soon disappeared from her sight down the lonely strip of road.

The girl stood gazing after him a minute or two, until his form was lost in the darkness.

Then she returned to the house, a strangely homesick feeling oppressing her usually cheerful nature. It was a feeling which she had never experienced before in her life in the same way.

In half an hour Fenwick had reached the station. Before he came in sight of it, he heard the roar of the incoming train, heard that roar cease when it stopped at the station, and then, a moment afterward, heard the puffing of the locomotive as it once more went on its way.

He knew that at a small country station like this the one in charge would lock up the place and go home as soon after the departure of the train as he could do so.

Therefore he ran at his best speed, and reached the platform just as the station agent was leaving it.

The man was past middle age, with grayish sandy hair and beard and a crusty manner. Fenwick planted himself fairly in the man's way, and the latter was obliged to halt.

"I want to send a telegram," said Fenwick.

"Locked up, and I'm going home," was the crusty response.

"But the telegram has got to go, even if I have to go in and thump it out on the machine myself. You needn't stare, for I can do it, though I might not hammer as hard as I saw you doing the other day."

The man stared and glared till finally the rigidity of his fea-

tures relaxed in something which came as near to a smile as anything he knew how to indulge in.

"You're the young Still River schoolmaster, I take it? I thought so by your being so pert-like. They say there's some queer things about you, too—but that's none of my business. Come along, and give me your message."

Fenwick went along, the message was sent, and the station agent said there would probably be a reply by eight o'clock in the morning, and he would be there to take it.

"Leave it, if you please, in the hollow of that big oak—I noticed it as I came down. That will save me coming clear to the station for it, and save you delivering it at the house, or schoolhouse, when it isn't sure that it would find me in either place."

Of course the station agent had to know what Fenwick's message to his unknown friend in Buffalo was. But a telegraph operator must be able to keep a secret, and no one could be more discreet in that respect than Mr. Grimes.

An hour later Fenwick was back at the schoolhouse.

All was dark in and around it. He reconnoitered carefully, and, making sure that he was not watched, he entered it through a window, and stretched himself out upon a long recitation seat. In ten minutes he was sound asleep.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A VOLLEY AT THE ENEMY.

Fenwick was aroused perhaps an hour after he first fell asleep by the sound of voices coming from a spot which seemed almost underneath where he was lying.

He sprang up, and in another moment was standing upon one of the desks, peering cautiously out of the window down upon a group of forms standing close to the wall.

There were half a dozen men and boys, and most of the boys were grown. From his position he could distinctly hear every word that was said.

"They say that the Parksburg committee are getting a little broken up about their young master—having him chased out of the schoolhouse by a private detective and the constable," declared one of the speakers.

"I guessed all the time that there was something wrong with that young fellow. Boys aren't apt to be as smart as he pretends to be if they are all right. Too much smartness is pretty sure to have some wickedness mixed with it."

"Everything is playing into our hands, anyhow. Crockett and Weyman and two or three others have got together to-night, and are talking the thing over together. In the meantime, they have left the schoolhouse unguarded. It strikes me that we won't have a better chance than now to take possession."

"And this time they won't drive us out of it the way they did before."

"You bet they won't! Not if shotguns can defend the fort. We can get inside, and they have no business to drive us out. If we warn them, and they don't keep out, then they'll have to take the consequences."

"But we really don't want to sprinkle any shot into the crowd, for then there might be consequences that would go against us."

"All they have to do is to keep off when we tell them to. You said that if I would manage it so as to get possession of the building, and move it back onto our side of the line, that you would back me up. All you have to do is to keep your word. You've had your turn to try to do this thing. You failed, and now it is my turn."

"Oh, I'll keep my word. If you can get the building back onto the Sanford side of the line, and keep the Parksburgs from get-



ting possession of it, then you won't find anybody on our side to find fault, you may be sure of that."

"We can carry the guns right in, and be ready for business," said another voice.

"Don't be in too much of a hurry. They will take good care of themselves right here. We've got something to do in taking care of the rope and chains which the Parksburg fellows have hitched to the other side. Then we want to get everything ready to start the building on its travels. If we can only get it fairly onto our side without a fight, so much the better. I'm sick of the row, and I wouldn't do anything more about it, anyhow, if I didn't hate to give up beat."

"Well, get a hustle on you, then," said still another voice.

Fenwick saw them move toward the trees on the Parksburg side of the line.

In another moment they were out of sight, but Fenwick could distinctly feel a slight jar of the building, and he knew that they were undoing the rope with which the structure had been made secure on the Parksburg side of the line.

Fenwick cautiously shoved up the window sufficiently to allow of an easy egress of his body.

In a moment he had slipped out through the window, and in another he had gathered up the six guns in his arms, and was moving off with them in a course diagonally from the road.

From what he had overheard, as well as from the words of Edna Weyman, it was clear to him that strong suspicions against him were beginning to be aroused among the men of the district which he had been hired to serve.

Penetrating the strip of timber to a distance of twenty yards, he reached a spot where the undergrowth and several large trees grew together in a dense thicket.

Here he mounted the guns, with the muzzles pointing in such a direction as to send the charges directly over the roof of the schoolhouse.

The trees between the denser thicket and the schoolhouse grew sparsely, so that by daylight they could be seen from the building itself.

Attaching a string to the trigger of each gun, Fenwick in turn tied the other ends of the strings to another cord, several feet in length.

Having done this, he cocked the guns, and then carried the end of the longer piece of cord out through the densest part of the thicket to a place where he could crouch secure in concealment.

Attaching the other end of the cord to a small bush, so that it would be easy to find again, Fenwick crept forth from his concealment and stole toward the schoolhouse, using the utmost caution in doing so.

He saw that the men and boys had already unhitched the cable which held the building.

Affairs were proceeding at a pace which Fenwick saw ought to be stopped at once.

At the same time, he heard a rumble from the other side and the heavy clatter of wheels.

"There come the horses," said one of the men, who was standing close enough to the tree behind which Fenwick was standing for the latter to have touched him with an outstretched hand.

"Then we'll hitch on and get the building to moving. In the meantime, you fellows better go inside, with the guns, for there's no knowing how soon we may be interrupted. Just as soon as any of the Parksburg crowd show themselves, you want to begin to shoot out of the windows, and I guess that will make them fight shy."

So much Fenwick heard plainly, and he did not care to listen for more.

All hands started off, and, as the young schoolmaster went back

to where he had mounted the guns, he heard the hurried tramping of feet, the stamping of horses, the rattle of chains, with now and then a loud shout which bespoke the hurry of action.

Fenwick waited until the fellows who had been ordered to go into the schoolhouse were out where they had left the guns and creeping round in search of them.

Just then he heard a faint shout of dismay.

"They've found that there's something they can't find," Fenwick said to himself. "And now is the time for me to make a strike."

He put his hands up to his lips, and shouted, in a hoarse voice, at the top of his lungs:

"Now, we'll clean 'em out, boys! Just pepper them with shot, and never mind who gets hit! Then, when I give the word, make a rush!"

As Fenwick shouted these words, he began running, with all the noise he could make, through the undergrowth, crackling the dry twigs and rustling the leaves behind him.

In another moment he had reached the spot where the end of the cord had been attached.

At the same time a chorus of shouts and orders rang from the lips of the men and boys on the other side.

Fenwick hurriedly groped for the cord, and then once more shouted, but this time in a different voice:

"Now, fire, and discharge them all together!"

A jerk at the cord—a jet of flame from the muzzles of six shotguns, and a rattling discharge!

A perfect pandemonium of yells and cries, with a scrambling of feet, sounded from the Sanford side.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE CONFERENCE.

If there was ever a scared crowd, the men and boys from the Sanford side of the line made up one as that rattling discharge hurtled over their heads and clipped through the foliage of the trees on the opposite side of the road.

As the crowd went running and yelling across the open space and sought shelter, Fenwick kept up as much of a racket by tearing around in the undergrowth as a single individual could manage. In fact, he was working harder physically than he had ever worked before in his life in his attempt to make noise enough for a whole crowd without any assistance.

The Sanford crowd had hardly disappeared, when another shout rent the air, this time sounding from the road which led from the Parksburg side.

"The Still River boys are not all dead, after all," was Fenwick's mental comment.

In another moment he was hurrying to a point where he could observe the newcomers.

In the excitement of his interest in the outwitting of the Sanford boys, Fenwick had forgotten his own private troubles.

But, as he stood there on the edge of a clump of trees, and saw Andy Crockett, with several other steps of the "Crockett flight," leading the van, with other boys of the school following, and several men in the rear, the young man was painfully recalled to a revelation of his own situation.

The foremost of the older members of the party was Mr. Crockett. A hurried glance showed Fenwick that Mr. Weyman was not among them.

"I don't want to see the rest of them—I just want to see Andy, and that's all to-night. I can't face them all now till I know how they feel."

Of course the discharge of the guns and the sudden flight of the Sanford men and boys was most mystifying to the newcomers.

The whole crowd was soon in the open space surrounding the schoolhouse; some of them were entering it, while others were extending their investigations farther afield.

As Fenwick had hoped, Andy Crockett was one of those to pursue his investigations in the direction of the belt of timber in which the young schoolmaster was concealed.

Thus it came about that Andy and Fenwick soon found themselves face to face.

"I can't talk here!" the young schoolmaster hurriedly exclaimed. "Come deeper into the woods with me, where we can talk without being overheard or interrupted. There are a number of things I want to ask you."



The big Crockett linked his arm in that of his companion in a caressing sort of way that told Fenwick plainer than words could have done that he was no less friendly toward him than he had been from the first.

"Well, Mr. Fenwick, what is it?" Andy asked, when the other at last paused in a small natural opening among the trees.

"In the first place, I want to know how they all feel about me—about my struggle with Mr. Tiffany last night, and my flight."

"Oh, we'll stick to you, every one of us!" was Andy's hurried retort.

"You mean the boys?"

"Every one of us," reiterated Andy.

"But the men of the Still River district—your father and the rest—how do they feel?"

"Oh, there's talk among them, of course!"

"And plenty of dark suspicions?"

"Some of them are suspicious, I guess. Mr. Weyman seems to be the most so. They think it's queer that a detective and constable should be after you so sharp if you're all right. What they think is more queer yet is that you should be so anxious to escape if you are not really guilty of anything."

A brief interval of silence followed between the boys. Andy's tall form towered above that of his companion, and looked awkward enough in contrast.

Yet within his broad breast there throbbed a heart of the truest and sturdiest sort, and Fenwick knew it. Brief as had been their acquaintance, Fenwick felt that he had no truer friend in the world than this top step of the Crockett flight.

"Yet," said Fenwick, breaking the silence. "I can't very well tell any of the facts about myself without letting out the whole of them, and some of the things aren't ripe yet. I'll tell you one thing, though, Andy—when everything comes out clear and true, you won't regret having stood by me."

"I know I shan't, Mr. Fenwick," was the ready response.

"Thank you, Andy. But about Mr. Tiffany—do you know what he is doing?"

"He tried pretty hard to track you down last night, but he missed you, somehow, over on t'other side of the cornfield."

"That's about where I reckoned he would miss me," smiled Fenwick. "But what did he do after that?"

"Went to Sanford to the hotel, and went to bed, they tell me."

"Then he's bound not to lose any sleep over me?"

"He don't seem inclined to. As it is getting well into the night, he is probably snoring, if he ever does snore. So, if you want to light out from Still River, perhaps you won't have a better chance than to make the most of the time between now and sunrise."

"I don't want to leave the district yet. I came here to teach a term of school, and, if I can only beat back misfortune for a little time—perhaps a day or two—I can succeed in carrying the thing through. That is, if you don't let the Sanford fellows trot off with your schoolhouse."

"The schoolhouse is going to be landed fair and square on the Parksburg side before the sun rises. So much is settled," said Andy, emphatically.

"Good enough. And to-morrow morning you see that all hands report at the usual hour, and, if I am not there, then I will be represented by proxy. Either Jud Fenwick, or somebody that Jud Fenwick engages to take his place for a time, will be on hand to open school to-morrow, and keep things moving. But don't you reckon on not seeing me, unless nine o'clock passes and I don't turn up."

"All right. I'll tell the others. And I'll tell you, too, that dad likes your pluck. But what was that firing we heard just as we came up? It sounded as if the whole State militia was out on a practice shoot."

Fenwick laughed softly, and then in a few words he told how he had bluffed the Sanford fellows.

He remained in the little forest glade while Andy Crockett returned to the schoolhouse to join in the work which was there being rapidly pushed through.

Andy had more than one mission to carry through.

The errand he had to do for Fenwick was to secure the latter's bicycle, which had been left, as usual, in the small shed adjoining the schoolhouse.

Fenwick paced to and fro in the little glade, and Andy appeared at length, somewhat out of breath, with Fenwick's wheel.

"I had to be pretty shy about it, for I didn't want anybody to ask me any questions, as they would be sure to do if they saw me

with it. But now I have got to go back in a hurry, for I don't want them to miss me. Shall I see you again before school to-morrow morning?"

"I can't promise," said Fenwick. "Neither can I promise to be on hand at school time, though I think there's no doubt of it. But how are you getting along with the schoolhouse?"

"We have got it moving, and in two hours we will have it fairly on land belonging to my father, instead of to the town. I guess there's nobody that will care to trespass on the Crockett farm, and, if they do, they'll want to look out for the flight."

Andy clasped Fenwick's hand, and then strode off through the woods, with his fearfully long strides.

Half an hour later Fenwick had reached the road, and, mounting his wheel, he rode directly toward the Crockett dwelling.

He did not wish to disturb the people in the house, so he got his bicycle under cover, and then found his way into the barn. Half an hour later he was sound asleep in the hay.

Daylight was coming in numerous streaks through the crevices in the wall of the big barn when Jud Fenwick awoke.

He sprang up and glanced at his watch. It was six o'clock. He had slept three or four hours, and the repose had refreshed him greatly.

The sounds which had aroused him from his slumber had been the opening and closing of the barn doors, and the voices of the men who worked for Mr. Crockett coming in and out.

He was careful to get every whisp of hay from his clothes, and to brush his cap, and to tidy himself up generally, before emerging from his lodging-place.

It required considerable circumspection for him to leave the place without being seen. In fact, when he got outside, there was a sensation in the region of his stomach which told him that he had fasted longer than he had done before for a long time.

"I am not a thief, or a burglar, and I'm going in to breakfast," he exclaimed.

No sooner said than done. The family seemed a little surprised to see him, and, to his own surprise, he found both Mr. Crockett and Andy there.

Fenwick felt a little embarrassed at first, but there was a kindly light in the eyes of the man that seemed like the reflection of the same expression which the oldest boy had evinced.

"I have got a schoolhouse of my own now," remarked Mr. Crockett, after the salutations were over.

"And are you going to have a session of school in it to-day?" Fenwick asked, looking the man straight in the eye.

"Depends. I have got the schoolhouse fair and square on my land, though it is up on stilts yet. But I have got the rollers out from under it, and I reckon the Sanford people will find it rather rocky business to move it off. You can see the roof and chimney perfectly plain out of the window there."

Fenwick glanced out of the window in question, and there, indeed, he could plainly see the apex of the roof and chimney of the schoolhouse above the low growth of trees which intervened.

"And all we seem to need now is somebody to keep the school going. Andy tells me that you are going to try again to-day."

"I mean to try," said Fenwick. And he compressed his lips tightly as he spoke.

"But, if Mr. Tiffany comes round again and wants to interview you, what will you do in that case?"

"I don't know."

"I wish one or t'other of you would be a little more open in your dealings. I have liked you from the first minute I set eyes on you, and I haven't liked that Tiffany from the first minute I put eyes on him. But, if you are all square and aboveboard in all that you've done, or mean to do, what's the matter with your telling your friends how you're situated? You're in some sort of a scrape, that's clear enough."

"It seems to be rather of a scrape. But I don't pretend that I am blameless."

"Glad you don't, for I shouldn't believe you if you did," said Mr. Crockett, bluntly. "The sort of chaps that goes about pretending that they never do or say anything out of the way all their lives is the sort of chaps that I fight shy of."

It lacked barely an hour to school time when Fenwick went out, mounted his wheel, and sped away toward the railway station.

As he reached the spot where the telegram was to be left for him, his heart throbbed loud with eagerness.

He thrust his hand into the hollow oak, and withdrew it empty. He tried it a second time, groping around in the hollow, finally



striking a match and holding it so that he could peer in and make sure that the message was not there.

"No answer yet!" he exclaimed. "And I must go back to the school without knowing. I have a mind to go down to the station and make sure. Perhaps it has just come in, and the old fellow hasn't had time to fetch it up here, though it is a little after the time for the train when he usually goes down."

In another moment Fenwick was again speeding down the road. But he found the station closed, and no one in sight around it.

Back he went up the gentle slope, but was presently startled by the rumble of approaching wheels.

In a moment he had clambered over a low fence, pulling his wheel after him, and, without waiting to see whom it was approaching, he pushed his wheel through a thicket, and found himself in an open and nearly level field.

Without hesitation, he mounted the bicycle, and, striking a course which would carry him in a direction nearly parallel with the road, he moved on toward the schoolhouse.

Before leaving the Crockett dwelling that morning, Fenwick had made a change of clothing, his object being to be prepared for a hurried trip on his wheel, if necessary.

At the moment he had on a "sweater," which was almost new and of a dark red color, which was most becoming to the young fellow's healthful complexion.

As he sped along over the uneven ground, he was suddenly startled by a hoarse bellow in his rear, followed by the heavy trampling of hoofs, which fairly jarred the ground.

Fenwick did not need to look back to know what he had to fear. Yet he cast a backward glance over his shoulder, and beheld a powerful, jet-black bull racing toward him, with steaming nostrils and rolling eyes—with head down and feet throwing up the earth with their vicious and powerful strokes!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FENWICK'S SWEATER.

Fenwick had in his time engaged in more than one race on his wheel, and won.

In the present case he felt like resigning from the race and abandoning the glory of victory to his competitor, provided that he were able to get out of the other's way.

What was against him was the slightly upward slope, and the rough, almost hummocky surface, and the stone wall to climb over.

Another bellow from the beast, another backward glance, showing him that his pursuer was gaining on him at a fearful rate, and the stone wall was almost reached! Suddenly the wheel made a forward lurch, and Fenwick took a header. Then came in a bit of gymnastics on the youth's part which probably saved his life and at the same time somewhat astonished the bull.

Landing forward upon his hands, he performed a handspring which sent him to the very wall itself.

He struck upon his feet, and a bound carried him over.

There, breathless, pale, thoroughly shaken up, with the narrowness of his escape, he turned about, to see the animal disintegrating the bicycle with forefeet and horns with an effectiveness which brought woe to the youth's heart.

When Fenwick's gaze fell upon the bull, the latter had the saddle of his bicycle on one horn and the toolbag on the other, while the rims were fast coming to resemble spiral springs.

"It's not a matter of repairing that wheel," said Fenwick, laughing in spite of himself. "If I ever get into more pleasant relations with the people hereabouts, I'll take up a subscription for a new wheel. As that old fellow seems to take a fancy to my safety, I suppose I might as well let him have it, though it strikes me that he would never learn to ride. I remember the first time I got onto one I felt like doing about the same as he is doing now."

He got far enough away from the wall so that his red sweater might not prove a further temptation to his enemy, and there flung himself upon the ground, breathless and a little faint.

It was still very cloudy, though no rain of any consequence had fallen as yet.

Fenwick soon revived from his exhaustion, and a glance at his watch told him that he should be on his way to the schoolhouse if he were to open the school on time.

This reminder recalled to him the probable embarrassment which he would have to encounter were he to carry out the duties of the day.

"I dread it!"—exclaimed Fenwick, springing to his feet at last.

"And I don't blame you," said another voice.

It was a voice, but not one that Fenwick feared, for it was Andy Crockett, and the two boys were face to face again—boys and friends of almost the same age, yet one a master, the other a pupil.

Andy was so tall that he could see over into the pasture from where they were standing. The broken and twisted bicycle lay where the bull had left it, and the animal itself had disappeared. Probably it was congratulating itself on having so completely vanquished the new and strange beast which had invaded its domain.

"Haven't you heard from your telegram?" Andy asked.

"Not a word."

"Then you can't do anything but skip again, as you did last night, if Tiffany and the constable happen to put in an appearance?"

"That's all I can do, unless I fight. I feel just now more like fighting than running—besides, I haven't a wheel to help me get out of the way now. What had I better do, Andy?"

"If you don't feel like facing it down, then I'll circulate the fact that there will not be school the rest of the week. That will give you time to get word from your friends in Buffalo, if that's what you're waiting for, and straighten things out generally."

"And wouldn't it also give the people in the district who are against me time to get tired of bothering with a schoolmaster that doesn't dare show himself? Wouldn't they all say that they knew I would run away all the while—that they were perfectly sure from the moment they set eyes on me that I had stolen a sheep, or done something equally criminal, and that I would fetch up at State's prison, or on the gallows?"

"But it won't make any difference what they say if it only isn't so," said Andy.

"But a part of it will be so. If I don't show myself at the school to-day, it will be because I don't dare to. And that's the plain truth of it. I do dare, but I dread the unpleasantness of it. If Tiffany only had an ounce of manhood in him, he would come to me fair and square, and we could fix things up till I could hear from my friend, in Buffalo. But, no; he's working for a scoop; he wants to show himself so mighty smart; he doesn't want to show any favors to a boy."

Scarcely had these words passed Fenwick's lips, when a loud shout for help came to their ears.

Accompanying this cry, there came the heavy trampling of hoofs and a hoarse bellow from Fenwick's late enemy.

"It's the bull again!" exclaimed Fenwick. "And he's after som'body."

The boys ran toward the wall, and, as they did so, they saw a man racing toward them, with hat off, his face almost purple with exhaustion, his eyes protruding with terror.

"Help! help!" came hoarsely from the lips of the man.

"By all the powers!" exclaimed Andy; "it's Tiffany!"

"It's Tiffany!" echoed Fenwick.

"And there's the bull, and it's the critter that's making the best time! Why, Fenwick, you won't have to fear that man much longer! He's a goner, sure as preaching!"

The two boys stood breathlessly side by side, watching the thrilling spectacle.

Tiffany was still a good distance from the wall. The bull was almost at his very heels, and a single misstep or the slightest slackening of pace would end the race—and the detective's life!

Suddenly Fenwick stripped off his sweater, at the same time seizing a long stick which lay upon the ground.

Flinging the red sweater over the end of the stick, Fenwick sprang over the wall, brandishing his red flag, and yelling at the top of his lungs.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### ANDY'S OTHER FIST.

Fenwick's shouts and the flourishing of the red sweater together were sufficient to attract the attention of the infuriated bull, and that was exactly what the youth had intended to do.

Tiffany saw the chance, and changed his own course to one at almost right angles to that in which he had been going.

At the same time the bull, with another bellow, swerved aside and came plunging down to the spot where Fenwick was standing.

Suddenly the youth flung the pole and sweater from him, and



with a single bound sprang upon the wall, and then down upon the other side.

The decoy had scarcely left the youth's hands, when the bull reached it, and in another moment was trampling it under foot, and treating it with even more vicious fury than he had used toward the bicycle.

Fenwick, breathing quickly, once more stood beside his friend. "Now, Andy, we'll move on," said Fenwick. "Tiffany seems to be getting his legs over that wall there, so I guess we needn't worry about him. And I don't want an interview."

"But I do," said Andy, abruptly.

"What do you mean?" Fenwick asked.

"I mean that I want to size up this chap who has been crowding you for all he is worth, and that you have now paid off by saving him from the meanest kind of a death! Why, Fenwick, not many would have thought of it, and fewer yet would have dared to do it if they had, especially when it was for the worst enemy you have in the world."

"No, no, Andy," said Fenwick, seizing the youth's arm, to detain him. But the attempt was in vain. Andy had broken away, and was running toward the spot where Tiffany stood, pale and breathless, leaning against a tree.

Fenwick turned his back upon them and walked slowly down to the road. He walked leisurely along the latter, looking at his watch as he did so.

The air was chilly, and, after his recent exercise, and being clad only in shirt and trousers, the youth began to feel decidedly cold.

In the meantime Andy Crockett was confronting Mr. Tiffany. "Was it you—who did that thing—that saved my life?" Mr. Tiffany exclaimed, falteringly.

"Not a bit of it. It was a mighty sight better fellow than I am, and, if there hadn't been anybody there but me, you would have been bull-fodder before this time!" Andy exclaimed.

Mr. Tiffany was silent. That he had recognized Jud Fenwick in the moment of the latter's heroism there could hardly be a doubt. Yet it was probable that he would have been much more pleased if it had turned out that the heroic action had been really done by Andy Crockett, instead of the youth whom he had been so persistently persecuting.

"Then I suppose it must have been Fenwick, since you all seem to make him a sort of an idol—such a paragon in all respects?" said Tiffany.

"If you can talk in that way about a fellow who did for you what Fenwick did just now, it strikes me that it sizes you up about right. The next time he is with me, and we see you chased by a critter, he shan't do a single thing to help you, if I can hold him back—make up your mind to that, old man!"

"You simply don't understand how the matter lies," Tiffany said. "It is for every person to do his duty, and mine chances to be an unpleasant one. Mr. Fenwick is a young man of much coolness and nerve, and with many fine mental qualities. I admire them all, and for his magnanimous action of a few moments before I feel the deepest gratitude. I assure you that, if I should ever see him in peril of his life, I would do anything in my power to save him. Now, can you find any fault with that, Mr. Crockett?"

"Can't find any fault with your talk. But it strikes me that talk is cheap, and that something else would answer a good deal better. If you will go to Fenwick and do the square thing by him, and then go away and leave him alone until he has time to turn himself, then I'll think that what you say means something."

"I want to see Mr. Fenwick very much, and, when I do see him, he shall be assured that I appreciate his action very much."

"In words," Andy added.

"No, in actions. If he is where you can speak to him, go and tell him so. Tell him I say so. I want him assured that I am not such an ungrateful wretch as you would make out."

"In your mind," muttered Andy. Aloud, he said:

"Come along, then, and pay your respects to Fenwick, if you have any to pay. And it strikes me that you owe him some. But"—and Andy shook his finger impressively before the face of the detective—"don't you dare to play any tricks on that lad, unless you want to settle with the whole Crockett flight, from roof to basement!"

To this Tiffany made no reply. Andy led the way down to the road, and they were just in time to intercept Fenwick.

The latter waited for them to come up, and for the first time he showed no anxiety to flee when Tiffany approached.

"It is time for us to be at the schoolhouse, Andy," said Fenwick, without looking at the detective.

Tiffany stepped quickly forward, and reached out his hand, while a most beneficent smile broke over his rather prepossessing features.

"We have got to be friends, whether we will or no!" he exclaimed.

And Fenwick was fairly obliged to take the slim, cool hand which was thrust into his own.

"I'm not unwilling, if you will do your part," said Fenwick.

"So you are going to open school again this morning?" Tiffany asked, feeling that his overtures of good feeling were not very fully appreciated.

"It is a school day, and why shouldn't school keep?" Fenwick asked.

"Why, indeed? But, under the circumstances, I would advise differently."

"What would you advise?"

"I was about to offer you a favor—we won't call it that, either, since you have just done me one so much greater than anything I can do for you."

"What is the favor? If you were going to offer to let me alone for a week, and allow me to go on with my work, as I have engaged to do, I will consider that you have done me a greater favor than the little kindness I did for you just now."

"I was going to offer you a truce."

"Call it a truce, then, if you are only going to make it a week in length."

"Not quite that, Judson, for that would be transcending the duty of my office. I will give you twenty-four hours, and I recommend that you use it in getting as far as possible from this locality. You are clever, and, if you use it well, I think you can make it very difficult, indeed, for me to catch you. Of course, I have no right to say this to you—indeed, it is very improper. But in consideration of what has happened—"

"You needn't consider what has happened, Mr. Tiffany, and you needn't offer me any truce of that length. I shall not leave Still River, unless I am obliged to, until I have taught out the term."

"But I advise you to accept the truce."

"I refuse it, and I don't want to talk with you any more."

As Fenwick spoke, he started abruptly down the road, and Andy Crockett walked by his side. Tiffany gazed after them a moment, and then followed.

"Stay a bit—just a word more," the detective said.

"Say it quick."

"I have given you twenty-four hours' truce—remember that. It was upon conditions—remember that, also. I caution you not to attempt to keep that school to-day, for, if you are here, and I have a chance to take you, I shall have to do so. If you agree to go, I will not make an effective pursuit for the length of time I have named. But, if you stay, I shall have to do my duty."

Fenwick and Andy had faced about when Tiffany had called them; but, as the latter ceased speaking, the young schoolmaster wheeled abruptly and started at a trot down the road.

Andy Crockett took a quick forward stride, bringing him within arms' length of Tiffany.

"Do you want to know what I think of you?" the youth demanded, his voice hoarse with passion.

Tiffany smiled, and in his smooth tones answered:

"It doesn't make so very much difference what you think of me, since neither my life nor my companion's depend upon it."

"They don't, eh? And, if you don't mind what I say or what I think, perhaps you won't mind what I do—so, darn you, take that!"

"That" was Andy's left fist, and it alighted squarely between Mr. Tiffany's eyes.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE TELEGRAM.

The school was opened, though a few minutes late, and the full number of pupils from the Parksburg side of the line reported for duty.

Andy came in late, his face slightly pale, and a look in his eyes which the other members of the Crockett flight well understood.



After the afternoon session was over, Fenwick said to Andy: "We have had another day of school, and it's the best we have had yet. Now, I'm going to see if there's an answer to my telegram."

"Do you want me to walk along down with you?" Andy asked. "No; I had better go alone. Tell them not to wait supper for me down to the house, for there's no knowing what will happen to make me late."

"If you are going alone, you had better look out for yourself."

"On Tiffany's account?"

"On Tiffany's account."

"I haven't asked you what he said to you after I came away and left you together this morning," said Fenwick.

"It wouldn't have done you much good if you had, for I shouldn't want to answer. But mind what I say when I tell you to look out for yourself. Tiffany and I didn't part good friends this morning, Mr. Fenwick, and, the worse he hates me, the more he will try to vent his spite on you—mind that."

"Very well. I'll keep my eyes open. But I begin to understand that I am not to have any favors from him in any case. But I am most anxious to get my telegram, and there surely should be an answer for me long before this."

Fenwick used some circumspection in going to the hollow oak where his telegram was to be left.

Once more his hand groped in the hollow oak—and his heart sank as he found it vacant again.

Assuring himself that no message was there, he started on a run down to the station.

The station agent was likely to be there at that hour, and, as he expected, he found the man in his office.

Mr. Grimes was in the act of thumping out a report of the train which had just departed, manipulating the telegraph key with the clumsiness of a hod-carrier.

"So no answer came?" Fenwick asked, as the man looked up at him.

"No message, did ye say? And didn't ye find it?"

"Was there one came—and did you put it in the hollow oak, as I told you?"

"Sartin, boy. It ought to have been there by one o'clock, for it was quarter of one when I left here, and I don't remember as I stopped on the way."

"And you are sure that you put it in the hole in the oak that I pointed out to you?"

"There aren't no other on the road that I know of, and I'm sure I put it there."

Fenwick's face was pale, and his heart beat fast.

"Then some one has stolen it!" he exclaimed.

"It aren't likely, boy. I dunno who could have seen me when I put it there."

"Any spy could have seen you, and there are plenty about. Every one of my enemies is a spy, and there are two or three of them here. There's Tiffany, the detective; there's Theron Crane, the master they have hired on the Sanford side to teach the Still River School. Either of these men would do it, and I don't know but there are others."

"I can't believe but the message is in there now!" Grimes exclaimed.

The man got up, locked up the ticket rack, and shut up the window with more rapidity of movement than he usually employed, and then said:

"I'll go with ye and see for myself. I can't believe but the message is in the hollow where I left it."

So Grimes' big, stubby fingers scratched around in the hollow of the oak, and came out empty.

"There can't be any doubt about it, young fellow. Some one must have seen me put it there and stole it out. It's a durned mean trick, I'll say that, whoever did it, for I know enough about it to know that it may hurt you."

"But you have a copy of it?" Fenwick said.

"I can't read much by sound, but I have it on the tape down to the office. I might have read it off for you when we was down there, if I had only thought. What I was thinking of was the harm it might do you. But I can pretty nigh repeat it to you, word for word."

"Repeat it, then, please. And, if it seems to be complete, I won't take the time to go back after the words."

Mr. Grimes stood a moment, scratching his head, and perhaps

the scratching helped him to think of the message. At any rate, he repeated it, and as Fenwick judged, word for word.

"That's it, I know!" Fenwick exclaimed. "It means that I must wait two or three days longer, at any rate. Only two or three days, Mr. Grimes, and I will be all right—you can understand that from the telegram, can't you?"

"I should say so; though, of course, I don't know what it all means. But, if that Tiffany will only let you alone for two or three days, as you say, it looks as if you would be able to straighten things out, and have them all your own way afterward."

"All I want is a little time, and it's all I have wanted all the while. If that message has fallen into the hands of Mr. Tiffany, or Theron Crane—there couldn't be worse luck! They will crowd me out of here, after all, and perhaps beat me in the end. I wish I knew which one had got hold of it—Tiffany or Crane."

"What sort of a looking critter is that Crane?"

"Just like his name. Lank, sharky, with a sneaking look. That man is ugly as sin, and it is to him that I owe the biggest part of my trouble here at Still River!"

"Does he have a little squint in his left eye?"

"Yes; and an ugly look in the other one."

"I remember now that a fellow looking just about like that stepped into the depot while I was taking your message. He pretended to come in to set his watch by my clock in the office. I didn't say nothing to him, and he went out before I did."

"Then it was he that took the message, and that is worse, even, than it would have been if it had gotten into the hands of Tiffany. Well, then, the worst has happened, and I have got to face the music."

Back toward the schoolhouse sped Jud Fenwick, his heart beating fast with mingled hope and fear, his brain more intensely active than it had ever been before in his life.

As he glanced at the schoolhouse, he beheld a light moving along, zigzagging up and down in the hand of the one who carried it.

He paused for a moment and watched it. He saw it approach the building and then pause. Then a human form passed between Fenwick and the light, and he instinctively saw both figures move on past the building, and in such way that they seemed to be approaching the opposite side.

With swift, silent strides, the young schoolmaster approached the building, and as he did so, and stood for a moment with his form close to the doorway, he distinctly heard voices around the corner.

Only a few words were exchanged, but those few were enough to tell him what was in the wind.

"I don't believe the boy will dare come back to the Crockett house to spend the night," said one of the voices. "Last night, you know, he spent part of the night inside the schoolhouse. I guess that's what he will do to-night; he'll sneak in and sleep there, for he's bound to stay here at Still River and fight it down."

Fenwick waited to hear no more. A quick leap carried him to the window, which he had purposely left open, and the next moment he was standing in the inside of the building, in the midst of the most impenetrable darkness.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A SHOT FROM THE DARKNESS.

It looked like an audacious, even foolhardy, thing to do for Fenwick to enter the school building just then, when he knew that it was the very thing his enemies were expecting of him.

One of those who had spoken was Mr. Tiffany, the other was the "shadow" of the detective, called Moles.

He had also heard another voice, though he could distinguish no words, and that voice he recognized as Constable Dudley's.

The reason he had entered the building was that he had left there an umbrella and a top-coat, which he was very likely to need. While he did not intend to flee from the locality, there was always the possibility that he might be forced to do so, and there was no telling what might happen before daybreak.

Probably those outside had no idea that he was in the building at the time, or even in the vicinity.

It was probable, indeed, that they knew he had gone down to the station, and that they had come hither to lie in wait for him when he should return. Doubtless, they were not looking for him yet.



They thought he would go to the house of the Crocketts first, and apprise them of this intention. But that he would eventually come back to the schoolhouse to spend the night, was the theory upon which Mr. Tiffany and Constable Dudley were counting.

Of course, it was not absolutely necessary that they should put themselves to so much trouble just to capture the boy, since he had for several hours taken no notice of them, or taken any pains to avoid them.

They might have entrapped him at the schoolhouse after school let out, or at any other time during the day, if they had chosen to do so.

But, on account of the courageous action by which Fenwick had saved the life of Mr. Tiffany that morning, the detective was most reluctant to take any unnecessary steps toward taking the boy.

Mr. Tiffany was in a certain degree unscrupulous. Yet he could but feel a sense of gratitude and admiration for the young fellow who was magnanimous and heroic enough to do what Fenwick had done that morning.

Besides, Tiffany was not ungrateful. He probably owed his life to Fenwick, and he would not have felt very bad if the young schoolmaster had accepted the truce offered him, and fled from the Still River district when the opportunity was given him.

It was not just comfortable for Tiffany to arrest so coolly the young man after what had happened.

If it had been Andy Crockett who was being persecuted, Tiffany would not have experienced any such compunctions of feeling, for there was still a black and blue spot on his forehead where Andy's fist had been planted. And the soreness of that spot extended to his inner feelings.

Yet Tiffany was invincible when it came to carrying out a purpose on which he had set out. He was not one to yield a point unless absolutely forced to do so.

Fenwick stood and listened for a moment. Then he groped his way to the closet where the articles he sought had been left.

He would have been glad to have struck a light, but he dared not do so. If he were to get the articles which belonged to him and get out of the schoolhouse unobserved, he would be doing well, and he did not care to run any extra risk.

He found the closet, and put on the coat, and then groped for the umbrella. Then he made his way gropingly toward the window by which he had entered.

As he did so, he was sure that he heard a movement within the schoolhouse.

He paused and listened, his heart beating loud and fast.

There were rats in the building. They had been disturbed by the moving of it, and several times he had heard them scampering about in the loft overhead. But this sound was not like that made by rats.

He was sure he heard footsteps tiptoeing across the floor. He strained his eyes in the darkness to catch sight of the human form which he was so certain was in the building with himself.

In vain. It was pitchy dark outside—so dark, indeed, that he could scarcely see the windows. Within, the density of the gloom was impenetrable.

Fenwick had made noise enough in what he had been doing to betray his presence to the other occupant, if the latter had been in a position to listen.

Therefore, the other must have been aware of Fenwick's presence, and probably knew his identity, also.

Was it some one in the service of Tiffany? Had the detective proceeded to such measures as that to be sure of the youth?

It did not seem to the mind of Fenwick as if Tiffany would be capable of such treachery as this. The man might be selfish and persistent, but there must, after all, be some good in him.

"No," thought Fenwick, "it can be no one in the service of Mr. Tiffany. Who else, then, unless it be an emissary of Theron Crane—or, worse yet, Theron Crane himself!"

Just then there came a sound at the outer door. The knob turned, the door was opened, and Fenwick heard footsteps in the entryway outside.

At the same time he heard another voice, which, at least, dispelled a part of the theory which he had formed concerning the other person in the building.

The voice which he heard was that of Theron Crane, and he seemed to be speaking to Mr. Dudley.

"I tell you," he said, in his dry, husky tones, "I think the

young fellow is in here now. I happen to know that he has come back from the station, and that he didn't go up to the Crockett house. If you only go slow and easy, I am pretty sure you can take him!"

"So much the better for us, then," said the gruff voice of Constable Dudley.

"But you want to be careful—mind what I tell you about that. This Fenwick has pretty near killed one fellow, and he has the worst temper of any fellow living. Get him aroused, and he would shoot you as quick as he would shoot a wolf."

As these words fell upon the ears of Fenwick, his blood boiled, and he felt almost as wicked as Theron Crane charged him with being.

The youth, indeed, had a terrible temper, but of late he had kept it under excellent control. A sense of desperation stole over him as he realized how hard he was being pressed by his foes, and what injustice and ingratitude was being visited upon him.

A few silent strides carried him to the window by which he had entered the building. He was determined to spring out through it and flee from the place, and his only hope and wish was that he might not encounter any of his enemies.

As he reached the window, he heard the sash of another window, on the same side of the building, being softly raised. And the next moment a stunning report came to his ears, accompanied by a flash from a discharged weapon.

Simultaneously an ejaculation of pain was uttered on the outside, and the voice of Mr. Tiffany cried out:

"Help! I am shot!"

There was the hurried tramp of feet, the chatter of voices, the banging of the door of the schoolhouse, the sound of a sash thrust down, and various other noises, all of which came from various different directions.

Fenwick stood upon a desk, with his head on a level with the window through which he had intended to escape, but with no clear idea of what had occurred or what was occurring.

But, as he stood there hesitating what to do, he heard the voice of Theron Crane cry out:

"That tells the story—the young wretch was in the building all the time, just as I said, and it was he that fired the shot! Quick, every one of you—watch the windows, guard the door—and you, Mr. Dudley, take the fellow, if you can lay hands on him! I told you all the time that he was a desperate character—that he was a runaway from a reformatory prison—and now the worst that I told you has been proven true."

Like bolts of fire did these words seem to fall upon the ears of Jud Fenwick.

There was a window open in front of him, yet for a moment he had not the power to spring out through it. He heard the hurried tramp of feet, and he realized that there were more men guarding the schoolhouse than he had at first supposed.

It flashed across him that it was probably a crowd of Sanford fellows, who had volunteered their assistance to either Mr. Crane or Mr. Tiffany, to make sure of the capture of the young schoolmaster.

If he were to escape under such circumstances as these, there was, indeed, a fearful gantlet to be run. Should he try to escape at all? Would it not be better to give himself up?

Then what Crane had said of the mysterious shot, the realization that Tiffany was the victim, and that evidence would all point with circumstantial certainty to him as being the culprit, filled him with a sense of dismay.

"I am innocent, yet I believe that if Tiffany should die, Theron Crane would bring evidence enough against me to carry me to the gallows! I have not a single witness to help me—I have nothing but my own word, and that is opposed to every other circumstance!"

In the excited state of his brain, the natural conditions were somewhat exaggerated. Yet they were certainly black enough, and it was no wonder that his first impulse was to seek safety in flight.

He hesitated no longer. Raising himself to the window-sill, and making sure that there was nobody exactly underneath it, he leaped forth, striking upon his feet.

The loud thump of his contact with the earth was plainly heard, and again that hated voice—the voice of Mr. Crane—cried out:

"There he is! Down upon him—cut him off—run him down—but look out that he doesn't serve you as he has served Tiffany!"



Not a word nor a sound fell from the lips of Jud Fenwick.

But, straining his nerves as he had never strained them before, he plunged through the darkness, his lithe form speeding away down the slope and into the road, and away through the motionless shadows, with all the swiftness of mingled fear and passion, and a dozen other impulses marshaled together!

And, as he ran, he heard shouts and the tramp of feet in hot pursuit.

And in another moment he heard another sound—the clatter of a galloping horse!

"I have got to take to the woods!" he muttered, betwixt his shut teeth. "A boy's legs, no matter how good they may be, are no match for those of a horse!"

## CHAPTER XXII.

### CLOSING IN.

Fenwick had no time to choose his course of flight. He had to take the course which at the moment presented the clearest road. That happened to be on the Parksburg side.

Of course, he had no time to form a plan. Ten minutes before his plan had been to remain here at Still River and face things down until expected events turned things in his favor.

All this was changed now. Some one had fired a treacherous shot at Mr. Tiffany—perhaps the man was killed. He, Jud Fenwick, already under suspicion, was charged with the crime.

When he had overheard the first remark from Theron Crane, his heart had been hot with hatred for the man. And in the wild whirl of consciousness it came to him that this enemy of his had so connived as to bring the appearances of guilt more strongly against him.

"Everything he may say will be believed. He may tell the worst things about my past record, and nobody will dispute them here. Of course, I can't stay here now. I must do one of two things—I must either hide like a hunted animal, and probably be caught at last, or I must give myself up, and let the worst happen as quickly as it may."

These were bitter thoughts for the youth, since, as the reader knows, he was wholly innocent of any malicious intentions against Mr. Tiffany.

Had the two met face to face, and the detective attempted to detain him, it is probable that he might have resisted, and, if able to do so, have overcome his adversary in a scuffle. But Jud Fenwick did not have it in his heart to do anything worse than that.

Burying himself in a dense thicket by the roadside, into which he had plunged, he crouched down, and strove to marshal together all the wits of which he was naturally possessed.

The storm which had been so long brewing seemed likely to be no longer postponed. The rain was beginning to fall already, and, in a spiteful, gusty manner, was driven in through the trees by a cold, fitful wind.

But Fenwick was unconscious of either the rain or the chilliness of the wind. His heart beat hard and hot, while his brain was almost wild with incoherent thoughts and plans.

"I won't give myself up!" he exclaimed, at last. "I won't surrender myself to Theron Crane, or in the same town where he has betrayed me. Constable Dudley shan't have the glory of taking me, and Mr. Tiffany—but poor Mr. Tiffany! If he only lives, and I can have a chance to prove to him that I didn't do that treacherous thing, then I won't care what happens to me."

Fenwick rose from the thicket, and, with the sharp spines of a thorn-bush penetrating his clothes and scratching his face and hands, he flung himself out again toward the road.

As he did so, he heard the murmur of voices, and saw half a dozen forms coming down the road from the direction of the Crockett dwelling.

At the same time he heard several shouts, and he knew that they came from the lips of his pursuers, who were approaching from the opposite direction.

For a single moment he waited, and that permitted him to see and recognize the forms of those who were coming up the road. One of them was Andy Crockett.

"I must see him, whatever else may happen!" he exclaimed.

Andy, with his long strides, was considerably in the lead, and, as he approached, Fenwick said, in a low yet distinct voice:

"Andy, I am here, right by the big birch. I must see you, and don't tell them, or give any sign."

Andy came straight on, as if he had heard nothing. At the moment the pursuers of Fenwick were drawing nearer, and he knew that he must not tarry so near the road.

Andy stepped in past the large white birch which Fenwick had designated, and in another moment the young schoolmaster's arm was linked within that of his friend, and the two were walking hurriedly away from the road.

Not a word was spoken until they had passed through the densest part of the thicket, climbed over a fence and penetrated into a patch of woods which was comparatively clear of undergrowth.

It was intensely dark there, so when they at last came to a halt and faced each other, Andy could not see the pallor of Fenwick's cheeks.

"I'm going to tell you, word for word, what has happened," were Fenwick's first words. "Pretty soon you'll hear another side of the story, and you may believe which you choose. But, as I am alive, it's the truth I shall tell you."

"I don't think, Judson, that you would tell me anything else," said the boy, for the first time calling the young schoolmaster by his first name.

"Don't be too sure till you have heard the other side of the story, Andy. They will bring a black charge against me, and all the evidence will seem to point that way. Yet I am innocent, and, if I can only have a little time, it may be possible for me to prove it. But, as I don't know who is guilty, it may be that I shall have to suffer for the crime of another."

Then, in hurried, impassioned accents, the boy told all that had occurred since the close of school that afternoon.

It is needless to say that Andy Crockett was a breathless listener to the tale. Yet, as soon as Fenwick had ceased speaking, the tall youth exclaimed:

"I am going to believe your side of the story, Mr. Fenwick, and it won't make any difference how black a yarn they make out on the other side. When it comes to taking the word of two persons like you and that Theron Crane, I would believe yours every time."

Fenwick's hand sought Andy's, and the two clasped again in another silent pledge of friendship.

"But don't stay here with me now," said Fenwick.

"But what will you do?"

"I shall run for it."

"But where will you go?"

"I haven't had time to decide yet. I am only determined to get outside of this town and this State, if I can. I won't be taken by Constable Dudley, and I won't be taken in the presence of Theron Crane. I had rather die first!"

"You won't die, and you won't be taken. I'll do what I can for you—perhaps I can throw them off the scent a bit. If I can't do that, I can, at least, let Mr. Crane feel the weight of my fist betwixt his eyes. I'm going to tell you something now that you didn't know before—that is, that I knocked down Mr. Tiffany to-day. And I think I did it pretty good. Of course, it was on your account, and I'm willing to swing around among the whole crowd that's against you, and let every one of them feel the weight of my fists. Confound the man that crowds a boy, I say!"

Not another word was spoken. Andy Crockett hurried back to the road, and he took care not to let the others see where he came from.

It would certainly be hazardous business for Fenwick to attempt to flee by way of the road. The only avenue which promised anything like a chance of escape was that which would be found by striking across the fields and through the woods in as straight a line as he could follow.

It did not matter so much then whether his course should take him.

Flight was the first essential; destination must be entirely a secondary consideration.

His meeting with Andy had restored to him much of his natural courage. It certainly was not better for him to surrender, if that course could be avoided.

To the reader it may seem that it would have been better for Fenwick, if he were really innocent, to have given himself up, and so allowed the facts to have been brought out, so his name should be cleared from whatever taint might be brought against it.

Yet it is true that the stigma of having been arrested and detained temporarily in a jail or lockup is apt to cling to a boy through life, no matter how innocent he may be. Therefore, the



very suspicion of a crime must leave a lasting stain behind, and that truth of itself should point a moral. To avoid suspicion is the wisest course, whenever it is possible to do so.

Fenwick hurried back through the woods, keeping upon a straight course, to which he was guided by the direction of the wind.

It was now raining quite fast, and he was drenched through. But he did not mind that.

He had proceeded scarcely a hundred yards, however, when he found that he was emerging into a clearing.

He had, unfortunately, struck out upon a side of the road with which he was unfamiliar, and he did not even know whose fields he was crossing.

Therefore, he was not a little dismayed, as he emerged from among the trees, to behold several twinkling lights moving hither and thither, held by dark human forms, directly in front of him, and quite close at hand.

"It looks as if I was surrounded!" he exclaimed, as he paused a moment and stared at the moving lights.

Even then he heard several shouts, and from the voices of the speakers he was assured that there were among them boys from the Parksburg as well as the Sanford side of the dividing town line.

"So they can come together and agree when it comes to hunting a man down," Fenwick exclaimed, bitterly. "It's queer that everybody likes to turn out and trample on a fellow when he is out of luck. Yet it is always so."

He stepped back among the trees, hurriedly revolving in his mind a scheme for flight.

But what was the use of revolving such a scheme of flight when there seem hardly the shadow of a chance of carrying it into execution?

Were he to return to the road, he would surely find enemies. It was clear that his pursuers had aroused the whole neighborhood, and that every one had constituted himself a special constable to aid in the capture of this guiltless fugitive.

"I might as well go ahead as to go back. If I'm caught, I'm caught, that's all there is to it!"

As he half uttered these words, he started forward at a swift, bold pace, making not the slightest attempt to conceal himself.

He directed his steps toward a point which would carry him halfway between the two lights, which were at that moment nearly motionless.

He reached them—passed them—then from his left came the shout:

"There he is! Quick, and we can catch him!"

As the words of alarm were uttered, Fenwick once more broke into a run.

Glancing backward, he saw fully half a dozen forms, with swinging lanterns, advancing in full pursuit.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### JUD AND JACK.

Fenwick had broken through the lines, and, as he ran madly down the slope and across the field, he knew that the number of his pursuers was becoming momentarily augmented.

In a few moments Fenwick ceased to look back at the dancing, twinkling lights, each one of which he knew represented a pursuer, and, instead, fixed his gaze upon a stationary light which he beheld at a considerable distance in front of him at the bottom of quite a long, smooth slope.

The descent was of such a grade that the youth was able to run like the wind. He had no fears in a fair race, unless he had to pit himself against something beside a mere human pursuer.

The light which he was approaching he soon located accurately. It shone from one of the windows of the Weyman dwelling.

The pulsations of his heart quickened as he approached the house. Changing his course somewhat, he placed the large barn and other buildings between himself and his pursuers, and he knew that there he could not be visible to them.

He knew also that if he could not be seen by them their progress would become slower, since otherwise they would not know that they were keeping upon his track.

He reached the barn, passed it, and then paused a moment and slackened his pace to avoid excessive exhaustion.

As he approached the house he looked eagerly toward the win-

dows. Light shone from them, and an undrawn curtain permitted him to look into the cosy sitting-room.

Standing where he could obtain a good view of the interior, he paused for a moment with the vague hope that he might obtain a glimpse of Edna.

At the same time he wondered if she knew of this new charge against him, and if she would have believed it had she known.

As he stood thus he was suddenly startled by a light footstep. Turning quickly, with his hands clinched for resistance, he found himself face to face with Edna Weyman.

The girl stepped quickly forward and laid a light hand on his arm. She drew him toward a long, low building which connected the house with the barn.

"Come quickly," she exclaimed.

"What is it, Edna? You don't know what you are doing! You don't know why they are chasing me?" Fenwick breathlessly returned.

"Yes, I know. But come quick. Andy is here, and we are going to help you."

"Help me—how?"

"Ask no questions, but come. Andy will tell you all about it. It will be best for them not to know, so we must be very cautious. And we must hurry."

"I must hurry, that's a fact, for they're after me like a pack of hounds."

"But I know you didn't do it," said the girl, tremulously.

"How do you know?"

"Because Andy told me. He knows. He said you told him the whole story, and solemnly declared that you were innocent and didn't know who did it. I believe you, Mr. Fenwick, and I should have believed you did not do it even if you hadn't denied it."

"Thank you, Edna, from my heart. That makes two good friends. But I hope you won't have to take me on trust a great while. I hope to be able soon to prove that your confidence has not been misplaced."

The girl half led, half drew her companion toward an open door, and there the voice of Andy Crockett greeted him.

"Are they after you pretty fast, Mr. Fenwick?" the boy asked.

"They are coming across the fields. It was dark and I got out of their way, so they were not able to go as fast as I did. They will manage to corner me before they get through with it, and find some way to track me."

"They will catch you if it comes to just plain foot race, that's sure. If you go by the road they will follow you with horses. I have got a horse myself to chase you with."

"You got a horse?"

"Yes, right here. I've told you about Dandy, the colt I broke to the saddle? Well, I just trotted him out of the barn and fetched him over here. I told the folks that they needed him to pursue you with."

"But I don't understand you, Andy."

"You needn't try. You just wait here and I'll lead out the colt, and all I ask of you is that you get on his back and put him to his mettle. Run him as hard as you're a mind to, and if you kill him it won't break my heart. But hold on—I don't want you to think that this scheme was all mine. It was Edna that proposed it, or rather she said that she wished she felt she had a right to take out one of her father's horses for you. That made me think of Dandy."

Fenwick tried to utter his thanks, even while he hesitated about accepting it.

But the words would not come. In another moment the horse was led forth from the shed, Andy and Edna Weyman had both pressed his hand, and the fugitive youth had sprung into the saddle.

Dandy was moved down toward the road, and in another instant the young animal had been urged into a swift canter, and Fenwick was making an effective flight—a flight which it would be difficult for his foes to match in speed.

Strangely enough, he did not see anything of his pursuers or hear any sounds of pursuit as he directed his course toward the center of the town of Parksburg.

He did not ride into the town itself. Doubtless the alarm had been carried thither ere this time, for the different parts of the town were connected by telephone, so the officers and citizens would be on the lookout for him in all quarters.



Therefore, when he came to a narrow country road leading from the main thoroughfare, he unhesitatingly struck into it, although he did not know whither it would lead him.

The road was quite closely lined with large trees, and consequently the road was so intensely dark that Fenwick could scarcely see the outlines of his horse's head as he plunged through the gloom.

As he proceeded the road seemed to grow narrower, until the overhanging limbs from the trees on the opposite sides almost formed an arch over his head.

The rain ceased. The night wind roared through the forest, making a strangely dismal sound to the ears of the young fugitive. Suddenly the horse halted—so suddenly indeed that Fenwick was nearly unseated by the stop.

Fenwick attempted to urge the animal on, but Dandy would only rear and plunge out of this! I'm down and you're up, and it's for the chap that's up to help the one that's down!

"Don't ride a fellow down, in Heaven's name! I'm bad enough off as I am!"

Fenwick was struck by that voice. He recognized it beyond a doubt, and the next moment he cried out:

"Jack Fenwick! Cousin Jack, is it you?"

"It is I, Jud, and with a broken leg. Hitch your nag, can't you, and help a fellow out of this! I'm down and you're up, and it's for the chap that's up to help the one that's down!"

"I'll help you, Jack, of course. But how does it happen that you're here?"

"Don't ask any questions now," said the voice out of the darkness. "But give me the help. A broken leg isn't the pleasantest thing to lie with in a ditch, I can tell you."

Fenwick quickly tethered Dandy to a tree, patted him on the neck to reassure him and calm the animal's nerves, and then groped his way to the spot where Jack Fenwick, as he had called the invisible unfortunate, was lying.

He struck a match, and by the flash of it he saw the youth sitting with his back braced against a tree, his face pale as death and streaked with blood, and the haggard look of prolonged suffering upon his face.

"I suppose I'm in the soup anyhow," said the fellow called Jack. "I guess about all there seems to be left for me is help out of physical misery. Still, Jud, if you had a mind to do the square thing and put me on that horse of yours, and take me into the wood a piece, where there's a shanty I know of, perhaps they wouldn't catch me after all."

"Looking for you, Jack?"

"Why not? Not that they're hunting very sharp, but if they happened to run across me they'd take me, don't you suppose?"

"I suppose they would, if an officer from Buffalo happened to be among them."

"And an officer from Buffalo is among them, though I reckon he's a little out of fighting trim just now. It's only a charge of shot in the leg, though—I wouldn't have killed him."

"You say there's a hut out here in the woods where you can hide?"

"It's where I have been hiding, and I was returning to it."

"And if I take you there, Jack, will you write and sign a paper clearing me of that charge which is hanging over me back in the city of Buffalo—the charge of burning a block of buildings?"

"Maybe I will. But just do me the good turn and help me out of my misery before you demand any favors. Do the service and then ask for the pay."

Fenwick bent over his cousin, hurriedly examined by sense of touch the broken leg, and then attempted to lift him in his arms.

But at that moment from the direction opposite to that from which Fenwick had come, sounded the clatter of a horseman.

At the same time lights flashed in their eyes.

"We are caught!" Jud Fenwick exclaimed.

"I am, sure," exclaimed the other, accompanying the words by a bitter oath.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### CONCLUSION.

The horseman, lantern in hand, flung himself from the saddle and sprang toward the two youths with a gruff exclamation.

"Surrender, you young ruffian, or I'll give you a lesson in shooting which you'll remember!"

The threat was uttered by no less a personage than Constable Dudley, holding a lantern in one hand and a pistol in the other, and the weapon threatened Fenwick.

The latter had had scarcely time to gently ease his cousin down to the ground and stand erect again.

"I am right here, Mr. Dudley, and I have no weapons except my legs, so I don't see why you need to work yourself up into a rage over me!"

"So you haven't got your gun with you? It is just as well, I guess, that you left it behind."

"I have just as many guns now as I have had at any time."

"I suppose you're all cocked and primed with a fine kind of a yarn to deny the shooting! But it won't go down, young fellow—you have played high and loose around here long enough. Even Tiffany didn't think you were such a desperate character. What if I should tell you that you killed Mr. Tiffany?"

"I should say it was a whopper in the first place. I have done nothing worse for Mr. Tiffany yet than to save him from the meanest kind of a death a few hours ago, as he knows."

"Have you the face, young man, to look me in the eye and tell me that you didn't fire that charge of shot at Mr. Tiffany something like two hours ago?"

"I have the face to say it, and I do say it most emphatically. But if you want the glory of taking me, I suppose you have got the chance now. I shall have to stand trial and bear the disgrace of it, though I am sure of being cleared of the charge in the end."

Dudley's pistol had been thrust out of sight, and now his hand was laid on Fenwick's shoulder.

Then for the first time he noticed the form half lying upon the ground at Fenwick's feet.

"Who is this?" he demanded.

"A young fellow who is out of luck—got a broken leg somehow. I was just trying to give him a lift."

"I don't see what we are going to do with him. But the others are coming along pretty soon, and as they have got a buggy I reckon we can take care of him all right. There, I can hear them coming now."

The rumble of wheels became audible at that instant.

Jack Fenwick, with his teeth shut tight to keep back the moanings of pain which his injury was inflicting upon him, glanced from the face of his cousin to that of the constable with strange alertness.

He realized that, even in their present pinch, Jud Fenwick had no intention of betraying him. If there was any possibility of saving the lawless young man, Jud Fenwick would have done so, even at his own cost.

If there had been a chance of such success—if the truth were not sure to come out in the end—Jack Fenwick would have been tempted to allow his cousin to suffer in his stead. But, well knowing that Tiffany's injury was not serious, it was inevitable that the trial should throw the whole weight of the crime upon his shoulders.

Besides, Jack Fenwick was not destitute of the sense of gratitude. He was bad enough, yet there were good impulses in his nature.

The approaching wagon was hailed by Constable Dudley, and two men got out of it. The third remained, and the light of Dudley's lantern lit up the faces of all dimly.

The one who remained in the wagon was Mr. Tiffany.

His face was a little pale, and the fact that there were some shot in his leg which had not been extracted showed that he had plenty of nerve.

Jack Fenwick glanced at the faces of the three men, and recognized two of them. The scornful curl of his lips showed his feelings, as he met the gaze of the one who had alighted, while a more hopeless expression evinced itself as he recognized Tiffany.

"It's all up with me, Jud, and I may as well take my medicine!" he exclaimed, in a low voice.

At the same time Tiffany leaned over in the wagon, and instantly recognized the face of the young man lying upon the ground.

"Ah, this is luck!" the detective exclaimed.

No sooner had these words passed the lips of Mr. Tiffany than, regardless of his injured limb, he sprang out of his buggy



and limped toward the spot where Jack Fenwick half lay and half sat upon the ground.

"Here, Dudley, is somebody that we will need quite as much as we shall the other one—perhaps more."

Jack Fenwick rose up as far as he was able, and thrust one hand out toward the constable, saying as he did so:

"Yes, I am your game, and you won't have to shackle me. A pair of handcuffs will answer this time."

"But you will need the handcuffs, and shackles, too, for the other one!" exclaimed Theron Crane, who had advanced eagerly to the front.

The man shook one skinny finger toward Jud Fenwick as these words passed his thin lips.

"Just hold a bit!" exclaimed Jack Fenwick. "There isn't the slightest occasion for your putting either bracelets or fetters onto my Cousin Judson. He was in the schoolhouse to-night when that shot was fired, but it wasn't he that held the gun. It was I that did it. Jud didn't know I was there. What is more, the building that was burned in Buffalo last March was set on fire by myself. Jud had a bad temper—pretty near as bad as mine—and it is true that he got into a row with a college fellow and done him up pretty bad in the fight. But that score is wiped out, and I don't think anybody blames Jud for what happened half as bad as he has blamed himself. I am saying all this, here and now, so that neither Tiffany nor the constable will feel it either to be for their glory or honor to take my cousin into custody. So don't take Jud. I am a jailbird already, and it is too bad to brand him as one!"

Tiffany bent eagerly toward the speaker.

"Do you mean it, Jack?" the detective asked.

"Every word of it, friend Tiffany."

Tiffany had idly let one hand fall on the shoulder of Jud Fenwick.

"You may go, Judson—and with my congratulations and friendship," the detective said, with a bland flourish.

"I'm going to stick by you, Jack, and see you through this," said Jud, bending over his cousin. He caught one of the latter's hands in both his own, and pressed it warmly, and there was a suspicious tremor in his tones as he added:

"If I could save you the burden of the guilt, Jack, without taking it myself, I think I would be willing to bear the punishment!"

At that moment Theron Crane sprang forward, his whole form trembling with a passion which he could not restrain.

"Are you going to let that fellow go, after all?" he huskily demanded.

"You go slow, old man," Jack Fenwick broke in. "You mustn't forget that I have your record all by heart. It was your money that hired me to set the Walker building afire, and you paid me just two hundred and fifty dollars for the job, and another hundred to keep still about it. If you hadn't shown yourself to be a treacherous old salamander, I might have kept my mouth shut. As it is, I am in the soup, and you're ripe for the same pickle, so go easy with your bluffs."

The little group standing there in the darkness and rain could not have been more startled at that instant had a thunderbolt descended and burst in their midst.

A husky, quivering cry came from Theron Crane, and he made a leap toward Jack Fenwick, with one hand outstretched, as if he would have clutched the young man's throat.

But a hand drew him back, and a fat leg knocked his slim ones from under him. The hand was Tiffany's, and the leg was Constable Dudley's.

At this juncture several other teams drove up. Mr. Tiffany and Constable Dudley placed Jack Fenwick in the easiest carriage, and Tiffany rode with him to Parksburg Center, where the young fellow was given medical attention and the best of care.

Theron Crane was taken to Parksburg Center also, and he had the honor of being the first person, with the exception of a couple of tramps, to occupy the brand-new lockup which the town had built.

Mr. Crane was taken back to Buffalo by Tiffany the next day, and he was there held to await the trial of Jack Fenwick for incendiarism.

That trial was held as soon as the young fellow had sufficiently recovered from his injuries.

And then, in the searching court examination, several points were brought out which had a direct bearing upon the events of our story.

The cause of Theron Crane's hatred of Judson was explained.

Although Mr. Crane was not himself related by blood to Jud Fenwick, both were, nevertheless, distantly connected with a wealthy Buffalo citizen who had died without closely related heirs.

A litigation over the wealthy man's estate followed, and in this Fenwick was a rival and opponent of Mr. Crane. To add to the feeling engendered by this rivalry, Crane had bitterly hated Fenwick years before, when the latter was one of the other's pupils.

This, of course, made it particularly desirable for Mr. Crane to get Jud Fenwick into the worst possible trouble that could be devised.

Fenwick's object in coming to the Still River district had been twofold. He wished to earn some money, since he was by no means certain of obtaining a share of the fortune which he hoped to inherit. His other object was, if possible, to discover Jack Fenwick, and to induce the latter to clear him by a written confession of the crime imputed against him.

Jack Fenwick made a clean confession, and so relieved the government of the burden of proving his guilt. This confession not only involved Theron Crane, but several other individuals, so that justice reaped quite a harvest from the transaction.

As a result, Jack Fenwick himself received a lighter sentence than he would otherwise have done. As for Mr. Crane, it may be said that he had to have a striped suit made especially for him, since the ready-made kind would have poorly fitted his lank length.

Jud Fenwick remained and taught out the term of the Still River school. Not even a day was missed.

The affair made of him quite a lion in the vicinity, and, when it was found that the routing of the Sanfordites, upon the night of their last attempt to remove the schoolhouse, was due to him, the defeated side swallowed their defeat with better grace than they would have done had the termination been brought about by a native Parksburger.

Of our story little more need to be told.

In the litigation over the rich man's estate, Jud Fenwick barely secured a paltry thousand dollars. This he expended wholly for his own education.

Four years after the events which have been the theme of this story Fenwick returned to Parksburg, whither he was called to become the principal of a new high school which the enterprising town had just established.

And there he was warmly welcomed by more than a score of old friends. And it is certain that there was no more staunch one among them all than Andy Crockett. Andy felt that he was too old to attend school himself, so Fenwick took him as a private pupil, and in the end Andy turned out to be as intelligent a gentleman as he was noble in heart.

As for the "Crockett flight," when Fenwick got back among them, he found that two new steps had been added to the lower end of them.

This is not a love story, yet it is not inappropriate to say that the young Still River schoolmaster was Edna Weyman's first and only hero.

The friendship of Edna and Judson ripened most naturally into a stronger and better affection—with the usual results.

The "bicycle fever" which Jud Fenwick started at Still River four years before affected not only the township of Parksburg, but Sanford, as well. And to-day, although several years have passed since the attempt to steal a schoolhouse at Still River, there is a Fenwick Bicycle Brigade at Parksburg Center.

Perhaps it was not a brilliant career that opened before the young schoolmaster. Yet he may well be envied by some whose names are famous from one end to the other of our land.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 8, will contain "The Sea Wanderer; or, The Cruise of the Submarine Boat," by Cornelius Shea.

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